

Outcry over proposed killing of disabled babies

BY ELIZABETH CHOPPIN

Disability activists said they were "shocked and deeply disturbed" after doctors suggested some disabled babies might be better off if killed at birth.

The comments were made as part of a consultation by the Nuffield Council on Bioethics* on prolonging life in fetuses and newborn babies.

In its submission**, the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG) called on the Nuffield working party to "think more radically" about a number of issues, including "active euthanasia", as a "means of widening the management options available to the sickest of newborns".

The submission cited euthanasia of babies with severe spina bifida as an example that could be discussed.

It also called for a discussion of the costs of bringing up a severely disabled child.

The Disability Rights

Commission (DRC) said it would "vehemently oppose" a move towards euthanasia.

A DRC spokeswoman said: "There is no doubt that there is a huge impact on families, but the answer is to provide support and not use any potential cost implications to the state and the NHS as a justification for euthanasia."

Not Dead Yet UK (NDY UK), an anti-euthanasia group made up of disabled people, said it was "shocked and deeply disturbed" by the RCOG submission because many of its members would not be alive had it not been for doctors' efforts at their birth.

It said: "It distresses us to think that such care might be withheld from similar infants in the future. Disabled people have benefited from advancements in medical science. Now it seems RCOG wants to temper the advancement by introducing a set of value judgments that reflect fear and prej-

udice about disability."

Bill Albert, a member of the United Kingdom Disabled People's Council's (UKDPC) international committee and a former member of the Human Genetics Commission, said: "It is common knowledge in the medical fraternity that...it is the clinical geneticists who are usually very sensitive to these kinds of issues and it is the gynaecologists and obstetricians who are cave people about it. It's pretty scary."

He added: "The Royal College seems to be stuck in some other century. The barbarity of their suggestions...it is worrying stuff."

Simone Aspis, of UKDPC, said: "If we start killing disabled babies, what message are we sending to disabled children with the same conditions whilst they are growing up – that their lives are less valued than non-disabled people?"

Gerald Chan, head of communications and external affairs at RCOG, said the college had "never actively promoted or advocated for active euthanasia".

He said: "In order to ensure sensitivity we had to identify where the information gaps were. These are issues that have to be looked at."

But despite repeated attempts by DN to get a response from RCOG on why it was necessary to consider killing disabled babies, it was unable to produce a statement. Neither the president, nor the other five officers of the college, were available to approve a statement.

The Nuffield report concluded that active ending of life of newborn babies should not be allowed, "no matter how serious their condition". It said this would alter "the ethos of medicine" and damage the relationship between doctors and their patients.

Prof Margot Brazier, chair of the working party, said: "If euthanasia was permitted for newborn babies, then why not older children or incompetent adults? Where would we set the boundaries?"

udice about disability."



Tracey Proudflock (pictured) has spina bifida – the condition named by RCOG as an example to be included in the debate around whether some disabled babies should be killed at birth.

Tracey lives in north London with her husband Liam and two sons, who are ten and 12 years old. Before founding her own disability access consultancy, Proudflock Associates, Tracey worked in the political affairs department of a large UK charity.

Tracey says she grew up hearing from her family how "lucky" she was to be alive because a person with her condition was expected to die 41 years ago.

"Forty odd years later, surely we should be saying people with these conditions would have a better quality of life. But nothing seems to have changed. I'm wondering where the progress is," she says.

"What RCOG is saying is painting a very glum picture. If you set that underachieving agenda it begins to fulfil itself.

"It seems, as a disabled person, you're being attacked at every stage of life...It devalues everything about me. I could start to think, 'Maybe I'm too expensive. Maybe I don't contribute enough.'

"They should be talking to disabled people as well and if they did, they wouldn't be saying the things they are saying."

Andy Rickell, executive director of diversity politics and planning at Scope, said: "We would question whether you can find a better quality of life in death. This is a frightening and alarming proposition, and a dangerous one. What does it say about the value and contribution of disabled people and their families?"

The report said babies born between 22 and 23 weeks should not be given intensive care unless "well-informed" parents insisted it was in the child's best interests.

Before 22 weeks, babies

should only be given intensive care as part of a research study.

The DRC said it was against a "blanket rule" for treatment of premature babies.

Bert Massie, chairman of the DRC, said: "The decision to treat or not treat should be based on individual assessment. To fail to do so would potentially be discriminatory and breach human rights legislation."

* *Critical Care Decisions In Fetal and Neonatal Medicine: Ethical Issues*; for a copy, tel: 020 7681 9619 or visit www.nuffieldbioethics.org

** www.rcog.org.uk

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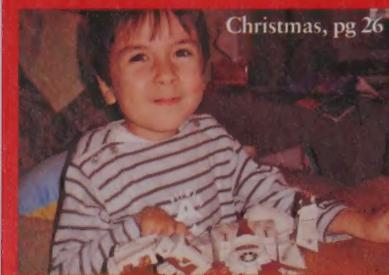
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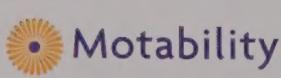
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Charity to send bill for cannabis

DN CAMPAIGN



BY LISA McCARTHY

A leading drugs charity is to press for a new private members bill to try to legalise the use of cannabis for medicinal purposes.

Release, a national charity which provides legal and drugs advice, says the bill will be at the heart of a campaign* it will soon be launching to highlight the problems faced by disabled people who have to use the drug illegally to alleviate pain.

The new campaign is likely to give a fresh boost to DN's own campaign to legalise

medicinal cannabis.

Niamh Eastwood, legal advisor at Release, said the bill would probably call for cannabis to be legalised for medicinal purposes; for a disabled person to be able to grow it in their own home; and for an exemption for medicinal use of the drug under the current Misuse of Drugs Act 1971.

She said the charity currently receives one or two calls a week about forthcoming prosecutions of disabled people.

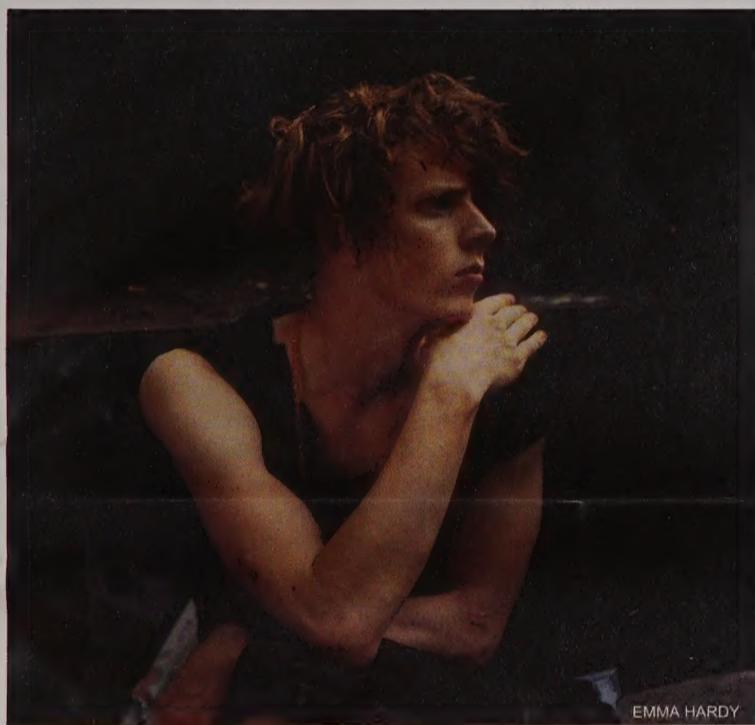
"We would question whether it is appropriate to use the criminal justice system to prosecute people in those circumstances when cannabis has been recognised as an effective form of pain relief," she said.

"These are law abiding people and because of their illness they have no choice but to go down this road. As a result, they end up with a criminal record.

"We want to see the law changed and will lobby the Director of Public Prosecutions to see this is done," she added.

Ms Eastwood said the charity was looking at following the lead of other countries that have set up a centralised cannabis-growing organisation, and would pressure the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency to licence the cannabis-based spray Sativex.

*To find out more, tel: 020 7729 9904 or visit www.release.org.uk



EMMA HARDY

New bill will leave people with 'fewer rights than burglars'

Mental health groups have condemned government plans to introduce a revised mental health bill, announced in the Queen's Speech.

The government wants to change the law so mental health service-users can be treated in the community without their consent.

Paul Corry, a spokesman for charity Rethink, said the bill would remove choice from people with mental health issues, leaving them with "fewer rights than people suspected of burglary".

The bill will also attempt to close the so-called Bournewood Gap, the mental health legal loophole that saw a man with autism detained by a hospital against his carers' wishes because he did not have capacity to consent to treatment.

Last month's speech also contained plans to give disabled people free off-peak bus travel anywhere in England.

From the editor

Exciting days are ahead.

I am sure some readers will be baffled (and even alarmed) at the appearance of another acting editor at the helm of DN.

But do not be concerned. The more observant readers will also have noticed an advert for a new editor in our November issue.

This post has been reserved for a disabled person. This will ensure DN is led by someone who can use their own experiences as a disabled person to guide their editorial decisions. But it will also give our new editor greater credibility when speaking to the government and the media on issues of concern to our readers.

This person will be DN's first disabled editor. I hope that I will be the last non-disabled person to lead DN. With all of the ground won by the disability rights movement over the last 25 years, it is no longer appropriate to have the UK's leading disability publication led by someone who is not disabled themselves.

I am also delighted that we have appointed two talented, disabled journalists to join the DN team.

But that is not all. Scope, the disability charity which publishes DN, has been criticised in the past over fears that it could be tempted to interfere in editorial matters. To help address this issue, DN is setting

up a panel of disabled people – young and old, campaigners, activists and professionals – to provide the editorial team with independent, reasoned guidance and oversight.

And there is more. DN is also about to commission a major redesign – the first in its 22-year history. We want to be sharper, brighter and more accessible to our readers. We hope to unveil the results, and our new, improved DN, with a major relaunch in the autumn.

But DN will not be standing still over the next few months.

Next month, we will be launching a new investigative series looking at the most important, and one of the least examined, aspects of disabled people's lives: poverty.

And to ensure that DN does not lose its sense of humour, I have commissioned the hilarious comedy troupe, Abnormally Funny People, to write a new monthly column.

It is going to be an exciting year, but we need to hear from our readers. What do you like, what don't you like, and where would you like to see DN heading over the next few years? I look forward to hearing from you, and have a wonderful Christmas.

John Pring, acting editor
Email me at: john.pring@scope.org.uk or write to Disability Now, 6 Market Road, London, N7 9PW.

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Helpline crisis may lead to lost benefits

BY LISA McCARTHY

Disabled benefit claimants could lose out on millions of pounds in welfare payments unless the government sorts out the Department for Work and Pensions' (DWP) helplines, campaigners have warned.

The charity Disability Alliance was reacting to a report by the Commons public accounts committee, which found that 21 million calls went unanswered by the department in 2004-5.

Callers to the disability and carers help-line were most affect-

ed, with just 21 per cent of people getting through.

The PAC report also revealed that claimants had to cope with 55 different numbers when trying to contact the DWP for help.

It was also critical of the department's refusal to offer disabled people interviews in their homes, as it does for pensioners.

Paul Treloar, of Disability Alliance, said problems could arise with the employment and support allowance – due to replace incapacity benefit and income support – which will require claimants to use the

helpline numbers more regularly.

"They face losing out on their benefits if their calls go unanswered because they won't be able to tell the department if they can't make an appointment," said Mr Treloar.

A DWP spokesman claimed things had improved since the problems were identified and that the problems largely affected one centre – the disability and carers helpline – two years ago.

"This year, that helpline has answered over 2.3 million calls and less than one per cent of callers have failed to get through."

Bodies not ready for DED

Some public bodies are ill prepared for the introduction of the new disability equality duty (DED), according to the Disability Rights Commission (DRC).

The DRC found that, despite the 4 December deadline, some local and health authorities have not introduced robust disability equality schemes. The findings found "inadequate preparation" by the health sector. The DRC has not yet released any figures.

A DRC spokesman said: "We published an investigation earlier this year which showed clear evidence that disabled people are receiving a worse service from health providers than others in the population.

"The fact that these same health providers are inadequately prepared for the DED is a real concern to us."



Go fish: TV presenter and keen angler Chris Tarrant celebrates his 60th birthday by launching Tweedability I on the River Tweed. It was one of two new accessible boats for disabled anglers launched by The Wheelyboat Trust. He was joined in the boat by trustee Barney Wilson, from Hungerford.

Warning over reform risks

The government's welfare reform plans still leave disabled people at risk, MPs and campaigners have warned.

Renewed concerns about the Welfare Reform Bill emerged as its committee stage concluded last month.

Vanessa Stanislas, chief executive of Disability Alliance, said the "conditionality" of the bill forces disabled people to go along with work-related interviews and activities or else face sanctions.

She said: "Whilst that is not forcing people into work, indirectly people feel the pressure to move that way."

Disability Alliance is also concerned about the quality of decision-making and that the government's expectations of employers are too low.

Danny Alexander MP, disability spokesman for the Liberal Democrats, said the committee process had confirmed that not enough money was being invested in the Pathways to Work programme.

Mr Alexander said: "There is still a massive funding shortfall. £360 million is not enough for new claimants, let alone extending it to existing claimants."

A DWP spokeswoman insisted "the funding will be there" for Pathways to Work.

She said the government was committed to reducing the number of benefits appeals and was working to improve decision-making.

In brief

Eye trial success

Scientists are a step closer to finding a cure for blindness, after a case study on mice showed that transplanting light-sensitive cells can repair a damaged eye.

The tests conducted by Moorfields Eye Hospital, London, have proved so successful that scientists believe clinical trials on blind and visually impaired people could start within 10 years.

It could mean new treatments for the current 300,000 visually impaired people in Britain who have age-related macular degeneration or inherited retinitis pigmentosa.

Flexible rights for carers

Up to 2.6 million carers across the UK were given the right to request flexible working.

Carers UK welcomed the government's announcement to define the term of carer under the Work and Families Act to include married partners, close relatives and those who live at the same address as the person being cared for.

But the charity said there was still some concern that some carers, including friends and distant relatives, would miss out because they were not covered by the definition.

More cash vital for care

A social care crisis is looming unless the government steps in to provide more funding to councils in next year's comprehensive spending review, a new report warned.

The Local Government Association said more cash was essential if the government was serious about its plans to improve social care for disabled adults and disadvantaged children.

People with learning difficulties living longer, an ageing population and more children in care have put pressure on the service, it added.

Childcare 'out of reach'

The government should provide more free and subsidised childcare places for disabled children, those from disadvantaged areas and others who are still missing out on affordable places, according to a new report.

The report* by the Daycare Trust, the childcare charity, concluded that childcare remains "expensive and out of reach for too many low-income families including lone parents and also families with disabled children".

*Childcare today; for a copy, tel: 020 7840 3350 or visit www.daycaretrust.org.uk

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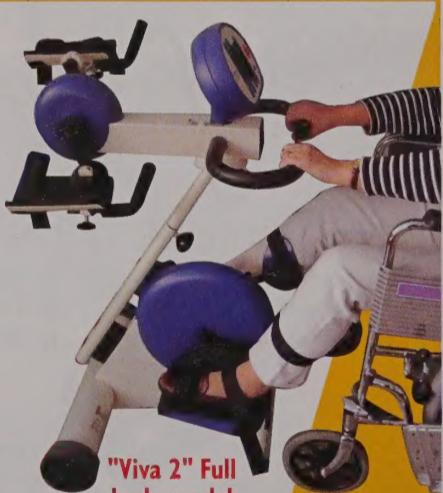
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Disabled cops' grants snub

EXCLUSIVE BY LISA McCARTHY

A national organisation of disabled police officers has received a government grant up to £100,000 less than other minority police groups.

The National Disabled Police Association (NDPA) has been given £31,000 by the Home Office – compared with £140,000 to the National Black Police Association and £100,000 each to the Gay Police Association and the British Association of Women in Policing.

NDPA chair Scott Westbrook said the Home Office was

treating disabled police officers less fairly than those from other minorities, just a year after forces became subject to new employment duties under the Disability Discrimination Act.

He said: "I'm not saying these other groups shouldn't get the money. They are deserving causes. It's just that we are too."

Mr Westbrook, a Metropolitan Police sergeant, said the organisation could become just a website without more funding.

In addition to grants of £31,000 for 2006/07 and another £31,000 for 2007/08, the NDPA also received a one-

off payment of £10,000 last year to help pay for a conference.

Mr Westbrook said: "We desperately need more funding as there's only enough money to pay for me to do this job for five months."

"It's crazy that in three years the NDPA would have received less than the other three get in one year."

A Home Office spokesman said there was "no hierarchy of diversity" when awarding grants and they were talking with the NDPA to "possibly assist with additional funding". *See also news, page 10*



THEO CHALMERS

Bare necessities: Sean Francis bares all for a fund-raising calendar of naked disabled people with a range of impairments, sponsored by the charity Paul's Place, in Gloucestershire. To order a copy for £15, tel: 01454 777 236 or visit: www.paulsplace.org.uk

Losses put services at risk

Support for hundreds of disabled people could be at risk after a London charity that supported them to live independently announced it was in deep financial trouble.

Choices, which holds contracts with eight local authorities, supports disabled people to recruit personal assistants and manage their direct payments.

The National Centre for Independent Living (NCIL) said some service-users had not been officially informed, and had been left with unpaid staff.

NCIL said disabled people had "long suspected" Choices was experiencing problems because of its "poor service".

NCIL director Sue Bott said they were first alerted when service-users received Inland

Revenue demands for unpaid tax and national insurance.

"We have been constantly warning local authorities of the dangers of relying on big national support services at the expense of local user-led services, many of whom have lost out on contracts to the big players."

She said councils should use the protocol agreed this year between NCIL and the Association of Directors of Social Services, which aimed to see more support services run locally by disabled people.

A Choices spokesman said it had gone into administration due to large financial losses but was "doing everything possible" to find alternative providers.

State of children's services a 'national scandal'

Social services for disabled children have been rated as "poor" by eight out of ten parents, according to a parliamentary report.

Disability campaigners have welcomed the report* from a cross-party group of MPs that calls for improved services and additional funding for disabled children and their families.

The report, based on hearings held in July, said parents struggle with issues including disability-related costs and inadequate specialist services.

Findings also revealed one in two parents rate education and health services as "poor".

While giving evidence, Al Aynsley-Green, the children's commissioner for England, called the state of services "nothing short of a national scandal".

Tom Clarke MP, chair of the cross-party panel, said: "Our enquiry has found a significant gap between the services that families with disabled children should receive and what is currently available.

"Delivery on the ground has been patchy and the needs of many disabled children are falling between gaps in current provision."

Steve Broach, campaign manager of Every Disabled Child

Matters, called the report a "watershed moment".

He said: "There is an overwhelming consensus that the system needs more money to function properly. The consequence of this under-investment is poverty, isolation and social exclusion for children and families."

The government is expected to respond to the report through the ongoing review by the Treasury and the Department for Education and Skills.

**Parliamentary Hearings On Services For Disabled Children*; for a copy, tel: 020 7843 1900 or visit: www.edcm.org.uk

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Scottish schools fail kids with autism

BY ELIZABETH CHOPPIN

The education of children with autism in Scotland is sub-standard, according to schools inspectors.

A report* from HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) warned that local authorities must improve key areas of provision for children with autism to avoid "serious consequences".

The report noted some "good progress" but said targets were set too low.

Graham Donaldson, senior chief inspector, said: "In many cases, the progress of pupils was not tracked systematically, with the result that schools and authorities did not have sufficiently detailed information about the achievement of pupils with ASD."

He added: "Parents were not always kept fully informed about the range of provision available for their children. Training for all staff involved in the education of pupils with

ASD was also a key area for development."

Joanna Daly, of the National Autistic Society Scotland (NASS), said the report was consistent with its own findings.

Ms Daly stressed that the "voices of individual families must be heard", as 46 per cent of parents think their child is not in the kind of school that would best support them.

NASS's new campaign, Make School Make Sense, aims to ensure children with autism receive a quality education**.

A Scottish Executive spokeswoman said an autistic spectrum disorder education working group was being set up – hopefully by the end of the year – to consider the recommendations in the HMIE report.

* *Education for Pupils with Autism Spectrum Disorder; for a copy, tel: 01506 600200 or visit www.hmie.gov.uk/publication.asp*

***For more information, tel: 0141 2218090 or visit: www.autism.org.uk/campaign*

Protesters: 'Inclusion works'

Disabled children and inclusive education campaigners marched to the headquarters of the government's education department demanding to be heard by an education official.

The protest, which was invited inside the lobby of the Department for Education and Skills, was led by the Alliance for Inclusive Education (AIE) and coincided with a parliamentary debate on the government's renewed call for a "continuum of flexible provision" for disabled pupils.

The march involved more than 50 protesters wearing red t-shirts inscribed with the phrase "Inclusion Works".

The group was met by schools minister Lord Adonis, who is said to have told them the government was committed to its policy of inclusive education for all children.

Lord Adonis agreed to meet with inclusionist groups at some point in the future to discuss how to develop the inclusion strategy.

Tara Flood, director of AIE, said: "Lord Adonis said the



government is committed to inclusion. I'd like to get out of him what that actually means in practice."

Ms Flood said AIE and other inclusive education groups were willing to work with the government to help develop capacity in mainstream schools.

Ms Flood added: "No one is saying this is going to happen tomorrow. But this (building

capacity in mainstream schools) will give parents a real choice."

A DfES spokesman said: "We have always been clear that inclusion is about the quality of children's education, and how they are helped to learn, achieve and participate in the life of their school, whether that is a mainstream or a special school."

Leading authors back disabled children's right to read

Authors such as AS Byatt, Julian Fellowes and Alan Titchmarsh have joined disability campaigners to call for an end to the "book famine" facing blind and partially-sighted students.

The "Right to Read Declaration" comes on the tail of a report from the RNIB**,

which shows that only 12 per cent of maths and eight per cent of science GCSE textbooks are available in Braille or large print.

RNIB has called on the government to set up a system to provide electronic textbooks that teachers can download and adapt for blind and

partially-sighted pupils.

RNIB voiced concerns that blind and partially sighted pupils are at a disadvantage because they must rely on teachers to photocopy, reproduce or enlarge materials for them.

David Mann, campaigns officer for RNIB, said: "It's a

scandal that in today's digital age of instant information, blind and partially-sighted children are going without the most vital of all things in school – books!"

A Department for Education and Skills spokesman did not say whether the new system

would be put in place, but insisted that special educational needs (SEN) was a priority for the government, and that SEN budgets were due to increase.

* To sign, visit: www.rnib.org.uk

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MPs slam response

MPs have come down hard on the government for its "disappointing" response to a committee report on special educational needs (SEN).

During a parliamentary debate, Barry Sheerman MP, chairman of the education and skills select committee, said the tone of the government's response to the committee's report on SEN, published in July, was "abrasive and challenging".

Mr Sheerman added: "We got [a response] with a tone that said, 'Who the hell do you think you are?'"

Various MPs who spoke during the debate agreed that the government had not acknowledged important recommendations within the committee's report, such as improved SEN training for teachers and altering the statementing system so

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Students strapped for funds

There is a "substantial shortfall" in funding for disabled university students, according to a new survey.

The survey* by Lord Snowdon's charity, The Snowdon Award Scheme, which provides grants to disabled students, found that the Disabled Student's Allowance (DSA) was often not enough to cover disability-related costs for students.

One respondent said the funding for people with sensory impairments does not stretch far enough due to the number of hours of readers and interpreters needed. Another concern was that the maximum postgraduate DSA was less than half that received by undergraduates.

Disabled postgraduate Nick Almond, at the University of Leeds, requires 40 hours of academic support per week, but only receives funding for 16.

Mr Almond said: "It is ironic that while postgraduates are required to put in more effort and work to attain their qualification, the government funding is halved. This feels like discrimination."

The Department for Education and Skills refused to comment.

*The Snowdon Survey 2006, tel: 01403 211 252 or visit: www.snowdonawardscheme.org.uk

abrasive' on SEN

that councils were no longer responsible for both assessing and funding SEN provision.

Paul Holmes, Liberal Democrat MP for Chesterfield, said: "The government response ignores most of the select committee report and misinterprets part of it. The response is 80 pages of largely self-congratulatory detail about what has already been done, as opposed to what needs to be done."

Parmjit Dhanda, a junior education minister, said: "It was not the department's intention to put noses out of joint... That is not what we were trying to do, even if there are differences and disagreements within the policy."

* For a copy of the report, or to see a transcript of the debate, visit: www.parliament.uk

Charity chair keeps job after helping wife die

BY LISA McCARTHY

A man who avoided jail after being found guilty of helping his disabled wife commit suicide is still chairing his local Multiple Sclerosis Therapy Centre.

Despite his conviction, bosses at the Croydon and Sutton branch have rejected David March's resignation and are happy for

him to continue as chairman, a position he has held for 13 years.

Mr March, 58, helped his wife Gillian, who had MS, take her own life on 19 September.

Last month, after pleading guilty at the Old Bailey to aiding and abetting suicide, he was given a nine-month suspended sentence and ordered to perform 50 hours of community service.

Simone Aspis, spokeswoman for the United Kingdom's Disabled People's Council, said it was "absolutely disgraceful" that Mr March had kept his position. "What kind of message is that sending to people with MS who are not looking for a way out but are looking for support?" she said.

Centre manager Ann

Dedman said members voted unanimously to reject his resignation. She described Mr March as "the epitome of a good man".

She said: "Dave has been an integral part of the Multiple Sclerosis Therapy Centre, which supports people with MS in the community. All the membership and the committee are in favour of him continuing his role here."



STEVEN BATES

Dog's winner: Mary Crace, from Suffolk, cuddles up to her hearing dog Tia to honour easyJet, which won a bronze award in Hearing Dogs for Deaf People's annual Hearing Dog Friendly competition. Ms Crace nominated easyJet because staff make her and Tia feel so welcome on flights between Stansted and Edinburgh.

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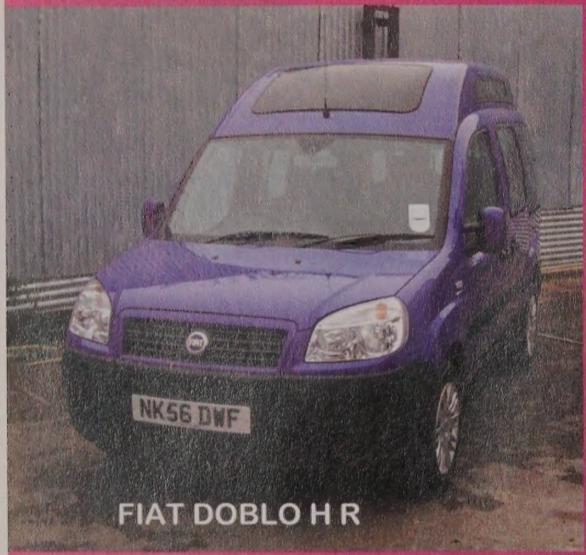


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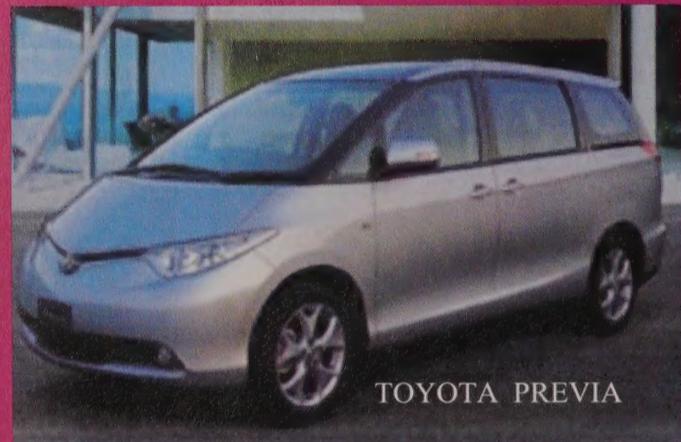
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Mobility company admits using disabled bays

DN CAMPAIGN



A disabled man was "incensed" to see a mobility aid company vehicle parked in a disabled parking bay at Sainsbury's.

Tom Aubertin, from Coventry, claimed that the driver of the Midland Mobility van (*pictured, left*) entered the store to go shopping and there were no blue

badge spaces left for disabled customers visiting the store.

After he complained, Sainsbury's said there was nothing it could do, and a Midland Mobility employee hung up on him, he told DN.

Ingrid Tippett, director of Midland Mobility, said: "We do use the disabled parking bays if there are some free."

She said the company has an

agreement with the store to use the spaces while it is carrying out repairs on equipment.

Peter Carnall, customer service supervisor at the Canley branch, where the incident took place, insisted there was no such agreement with the company.

But he said that, because Sainsbury's does not employ a car park attendant, "all we can do is apologise".

Wheelchair report 'pointless' unless funding is sorted

BY LISA McCARTHY

A new report proposing changes to improve wheelchair services has been criticised as "ineffective" by one of its authors.

Peter Kemp, chief executive of the National Wheelchair Users' Forum, said the report* by the Care Services Improvement Partnership was a "wonderful academic exercise" but "pointless" unless there is a solution to the funding problems facing primary care trusts.

Mr Kemp said: "I think the report has identified all the right things but what they haven't mentioned is the fact that most of the primary care trusts are in a financial mess at the moment, so these proposals can't be driven forward."

Key recommendations include ensuring all users receive the same high standards and promoting voucher schemes.

Mr Kemp said the Department of Health report was one of a long line of reports identifying problems in the "Cinderella" service, which needed "huge" future investment.

Whizz-Kidz chief executive Ruth Owen hailed the report as a "step in the right direction".

She said: "The report goes further than most in that it identifies the specific needs of children and young people."

"Giving a child the right wheelchair at the right time, meeting their ongoing lifestyle needs, will mean each one of them has the chance to lead a more independent childhood."

Meanwhile, a report** by Disabled Living North West and the Co-operative Bank has revealed many disabled people are still without inexpensive equipment, including wheelchairs, which could change their lives. The report blames conflict between health and social care services for the problems with community equipment services.

*Out and About; tel 020 7210 4850 or visit: www.dh.gov.uk

**Getting On With Our Lives; tel: 0870 601 580 or visit: www.disabledliving.co.uk

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Calls to shun rude Robbie

Campaigners are calling on fans to boycott Robbie Williams's new album, after he released a song offending disabled people.

In the singer's latest single, *Rudebox* – from his new album of the same name – he sings: "Dance like you just won at the Special Olympics."

People First (Self Advocacy) is planning to shun the album.

Spokesman Raymond John-

son said: "It's disgraceful. This is just a modern way of saying dance like a spastic. Robbie Williams is supposed to be a role model but he has really let himself down and is patronising disabled people."

Anne Pridmore, chair of the United Kingdom's Disabled People's Council, accused Williams of "rank disablism". "I am a big Robbie Williams

fan and I went to see him recently, but I won't be buying this album."

The singer has not apologised. His spokesman said: "He adores sport of any kind and is full of admiration for disabled athletes."

A spokesman for his record company, EMI, added: "We do not believe it is appropriate for us to censor our artists."



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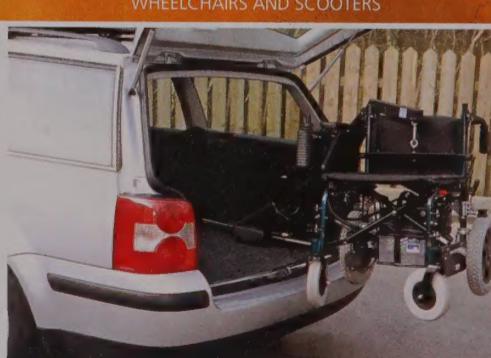


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Disabled officers' double jeopardy

BY LISA McCARTHY

Some employment tribunals are discriminating against disabled police officers in the way they use the Disability Discrimination Act, according to a leading disabled police officer.

Scott Westbrook, chair of the National Disabled Police Association, said many tribunals involving disabled police officers force them to prove they are disabled at a preliminary hearing before they can go on to pursue their claim for discrimination.

Speaking to the All Party Parliamentary Group on Disability last month, Mr Westbrook said being made to go to court twice was "distasteful" and puts people off pursuing their claim.

He said people with unseen impairments were most affected by the procedures.

"It seems to be unfair and prohibiting some people from taking their cases forward to go through two sets of costly hearings," said Mr Westbrook.

"At the first one you have to prove that you are disabled and are actually covered by the DDA, which is distasteful."

"You have to go through all this before you can even prove you have been discriminated against, which is very unfair."

Mr Westbrook proposed taking the decision out of the courts' hands and setting up an independent panel where a disabled person could apply in writing for a decision over their disability status, which they could then present to the discrimination tribunal hearing.

"That way they don't have to go through the whole unnecessary first court hearing and they can focus on the main reason they are there – the discrimination problem," he added.

The group of MPs and peers, chaired by Lord Ashley, agreed to examine the issue.



Royal appointment: Steve McNeice displays his prostheses to the Duke of Gloucester at the new Douglas Bader Centre for amputees. The centre, in the new Queen Mary's Hospital, London, has a gym, fitness programmes and a manufacturing facility for prostheses.

Mental health services 'unacceptable'

One in three patients on mental health wards is affected by violence, according to new research.

In its annual report*, the Healthcare Commission said healthcare services for people with learning difficulties and mental health conditions in England and Wales were "below acceptable standards".

The report found a failure to meet fluctuating needs of patients, overcrowding and cases where patients could not access talking therapies. It also found instances of people being neglected and abused.

Jo Williams, of Mencap, said: "We only have to look at the incidents of abuse and neglect of

people with learning disability exposed earlier this year at an NHS Trust in Cornwall (DN, August, pages 3 and 14) to see that the healthcare of people with a learning disability is not a priority for the health service."

A Department of Health spokesman said measures will shortly be announced to "reassure" patients and improve safety.

He added: "We agree that people with learning difficulties need better healthcare which is centred on their needs. We take this very seriously and we are working hard to improve this."

*State of Healthcare 2006, tel: 0845 601 3012 or visit: www.healthcarecommission.org.uk

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New focus on bones and joints

BY ELIZABETH CHOPPIN

New government plans to improve health services for people with bone and joint conditions have been given a cautious welcome by disability groups.

The Musculoskeletal Services Framework (MSF), produced by the Department of Health (DH), aims to improve the assessment, diagnosis and treatment of people with arthritis and musculoskeletal conditions.

At the launch of the framework last month, health minister Andy Burnham promised that patients would get faster treatment and more services would be delivered closer to home.

One of the main focuses of the framework is delivering a maximum wait of 18 weeks from GP referral to hospital



treatment. It also sets out how the NHS can use a wider range of staff in addition to GPs and hospital consultants.

The charity Arthritis Care took part in the consultation and has produced a patients' guide* on the MSF.

Kate Llewelyn (pictured, above), head of information services at Arthritis Care and a service-user, said: "People want direct access to the right health professional at a suitable time – why must you go through your

GP just to get a new referral to a physiotherapist, when one quick visit to the physiotherapist might hit the spot?"

Neil Betteridge, chief executive of Arthritis Care, said: "We will continue to promote the framework – but we'll also audit its implementation, and press the DH to fulfil its duties."

Bill Freeman, director of the Arthritis and Musculoskeletal Alliance, said he welcomes the MSF as it is the only existing guidance on how to improve services for this group.

But he says that there could be too much focus on the 18-week waiting time at the expense of quality long-term care.

*Information for People with Bone and Joint Problems; for a copy, tel: 020 7380 6500 or visit: www.arthriticcare.org.uk

Travel cost barrier for low-income patients

Low-income NHS patients, including disabled people, are missing out on help with transport costs to and from hospital.

The Department of Health (DH) has been criticised for not tackling the issue in its response to the health committee's report on NHS charges.

The health committee's report said the Hospital Travel Costs Scheme (HTCS) should be widely advertised and easier to access. The report said rising transport costs were a "serious concern" for patients and cited

statistics from the social exclusion unit (SEU), estimating that 1.4 million people each year miss, decline or do not seek healthcare because of transport problems.

The Socialist Health Association (SHA) said many hospitals make it "extremely difficult" for patients to find out they are entitled to help with travel costs, "and even more difficult for them to get the money".

The government said individual hospital trusts are responsible for making patients aware of

the scheme and refunding travel costs where appropriate.

An SHA spokesman said: "By refusing to issue clear guidance to trusts on these matters the DH is failing some of its most disadvantaged patients."

A DH spokeswoman said: "We will look at how providers and commissioners can raise awareness of the scheme among staff and patients, in particular focusing on disadvantaged groups that may benefit most."

*For a copy, tel: 020 7210 4850 or visit: www.dh.gov.uk

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Athletes groomed for 2012

BY LISA McCARTHY

Some of the top disabled athletes from Wales have been put through their paces at a high performance training camp aimed at turning them into the stars of the 2012 Paralympics.

Over 50 athletes from the new talent academy run by The Federation for Disability Sport Wales (FDSW) took part in the weekend in Pembrokeshire.

The athletes, aged between 12 and 18, completed a series of physical tests in their quest to emulate the likes of wheelchair athlete Tanni Grey Thompson and swimmer David Roberts.

The programme is funded by the Sports Council for Wales and the Welsh Assembly.

Anthony Hughes, national performance manager at the FDSW, said he was "elated" by the performances of the youngsters, who trained in boules, wheelchair basketball and rowing, and believes they could win medals at the Paralympics.

"We now have a selected, talented bunch of athletes with an enormous amount of character who with the right opportunities and support from the FDSW Academy will become medal takers," said Hughes.

"We have some awesome



Medal in the making: James Brookman, 12, from Cardiff taking part in the FDSW performance cycling squad

young talent in Wales. Some of the athletes already know their targets and who they've got to beat and the level they need to be at.

"Now it's all about goal planning, lots of hard work and the hours put in. We're going to focus on their sport and on their long-term outcomes ... and are looking towards 2012," he added.

In addition to the physical tests, athletes took part in sessions on hydration, performance psychology, managing training programmes, and nutrition and diet.

UK triumph in tennis nationals

Tennis champ Peter Norfolk netted another major win, by lifting the quad singles title at the National Indoor Wheelchair Tennis Tournament.

Britain's world number one retained his Nottingham title after beating Israeli second seed Shranga Weinberg 6-0, 6-2.

Top men's seed Robin Ammerlaan of the Netherlands took both the men's singles and doubles titles in the main wheelchair event. Britain's number one, Jayant Mistry, was beaten in straight sets in the quarter-finals by Ammerlaan.

Ammerlaan defeated his compatriot and second seed Maikel Scheffers 6-2, 6-0 to win the singles title and teamed up with Scheffers to win the men's doubles, defeating second seeds Majdi and Gert Vos of Belgium 6-1, 6-3.

In the women's singles final, Japanese third seed Mie Yaoso followed her semi-final win over defending champion Jiske Griffioen with a 6-4, 2-6, 6-1 victory over Belgian Brigitte Ameryckx.

Both Griffioen and Ameryckx exacted revenge on Yaoso, defeating her and partner Katharina Kruger to lift the women's doubles title.



Milking applause: Beijing, host of the 2008 Paralympic Games, has launched its mascot. Fu Niu Lele represents ancient Chinese culture, symbolises Paralympians' "never say die spirit" and fits in with the themes of transcendence, equality and integration.

New alliance to help 2012 swimmers

British swimmers smashed 32 records at the last competition before this month's world championships in South Africa.

Daniel English and Danielle Watts, who broke six records between them, took the best individual performance trophies at the Short Course Swimming Championships in Sheffield last month.

The weekend also marked the launch of an agreement between Disability Sports

Events and British Swimming, which aims to propel British swimmers towards glory at the 2012 Paralympic Games.

David Sparkes, chief executive of the Amateur Swimming Association, praised the event and said the new partnership would help talented swimmers.

"By working together we hope to give our athletes the best possible preparation in the run-up to London 2012," said Sparkes.

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DN12/06



Time to get equal

Time to Get Equal in the workplace

Scope has joined forces with the trade union Amicus, the TUC and the Department of Trade and Industry to provide support to disabled people in the workplace through the Disability Champions project.

Disability Champions are trade union representatives with an interest in disability equality issues. The aim is to encourage every employer to have at least one disability champion.

Disability Champions@Work was conceived in July 2002 and born in January 2003. This exciting project won a £50,000 grant as part of the European Year of Disabled People. Amicus continued to fund the work of the project until the current phase of DTI funding.

In 2006 the vision of the project became a reality. More than 320 people have become Disability Champions. They come from 21 trade unions and are located in all regions of England, in Scotland, in Wales and both Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic. Disability Champions work in a full range of jobs: public and private sector, large organisations and small businesses.

All Champions want to see genuine equality for disabled people in the world of work. A five-day dedicated training



course for Disability Champions has been adopted and published by the TUC and is now available in many centres around the country.

Visit the website at www.disabilitychampions.com

We are the Champions!

More than 100 people joined us at the House of Commons on 26 October for the launch of our new Disability Champions@Work scheme in association with public sector union Amicus.

Guests included parliamentarians, Government staff, staff working for Amicus and other trade unions involved with the project.

Speaking at the event, acting chief executive Jon Sparkes said, "There is much more to be done to achieve equality for disabled people in the workplace, and to drive the recruitment of the many disabled people who wish to work.

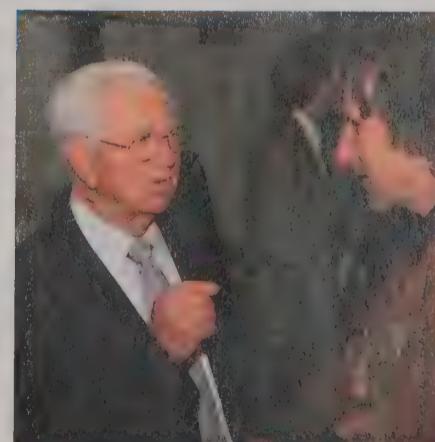
"Scope is proud to be working with its partners to lead real, practical change, through this initiative and others. We now need parliamentarians to support the project by encouraging employers to become partners of Disability Champions."

Siobhan Endean, head of equality for Amicus said: "What Disability Champions also need is for employers

to facilitate this learning and for the capacity to put disability access on the agenda with their employers.

"Amicus are hoping that the Government will give statutory backing to disability champions to give them the same protection health and safety representatives have at work."

Key speakers at the event included Scope Disability Champions project co-ordinator Margie Woodward and MPs Roger Berry and Terry Rooney, who sponsored the event.



For more information on any of the articles featured see www.timetogtequal.org.uk or contact Louis High on 020 7619 7199.



BCODP: 25 years on the front line

As the British Council of Disabled People celebrates its 25th anniversary, Lisa McCarthy examines its legacy – and its fight for survival

A walkout by 200 disabled people at an international conference in Canada proved to be a turning point for the disability movement in the UK – and the catalyst for the birth of the British Council of Disabled People (BCODP).

The year was 1980, the International Year of Disabled People, and it was the first time that disabled people had come together from across the world to discuss issues affecting them.

"We were at the Disabled People's International [conference]," said Rachel Hurst, former BCODP chair. "It was the first time we had come together, so we were all really excited. But we ended up walking out because we felt we weren't being represented properly. They were talking about disabled people, but none of them were disabled."

Frustrated and angry, the delegates returned home and began setting up their own national organisations.

Born in 1981, BCODP's mission statement was clear:

"To secure by all democratic means our full and equal human and civil rights as disabled people in the UK."

Initially, there were seven national organisations that formed BCODP, including the Spinal Injuries Association and the National Federation of the Blind.

'Although we have achieved a lot, this is not a time for disabled people to sit on our laurels'

"The first few years were really hard, but extremely exciting," says Hurst. "People were willing to give a lot of time and energy for it, but we were completely out on a limb – nobody was listening to us. We had to meet in members' houses as we didn't have any money to hire out rooms. We were relying on people's charity."

In 1985, they persuaded the government to give them some money, but were viewed with suspicion by the establishment.

"We were seen as 'reds under the beds'. People in the establishment were horrified by the things we were saying."

"They were running charities and couldn't understand that we were a set of people who were shouting from the rooftops: 'what you have done to us is disgusting.' We couldn't mince our words."

"We were much more isolated and segregated from society than disabled people or the BCODP are today," she adds.

A quarter of a century later, BCODP has just celebrated its milestone anniversary with a name change. It is now the United Kingdom's Disabled People's Council (UKDPC), a change aimed at bringing about more cohesion with the devolved governments of Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

UKDPC now has 106 member groups and has been a key player in the disability rights movement. But has it done what it set out to achieve?

Acting chair Anne Pridmore thinks it has made a good



Rights fight: (Above and top) Two of the protests BCODP members have taken part in over the last 25 years

attempt. "We have been at the forefront of the disability rights movement for the last 25 years," she says. "We were the first national group to champion the rights of disabled people, we have been involved in the introduction of the Disability Discrimination Act and the Direct Payments Act and we helped to establish the UK Disabled People's Parliament."

But she adds: "Although we have achieved a lot, this is not a time for disabled people to sit on our laurels. We have got to come together and continue to fight for our civil rights."

Campaigning for equal rights – they made 14 unsuccessful attempts to have a

Civil Rights Bill introduced – has been its primary aim, but it has come up against barriers.

"One of the main stumbling blocks is that funding has been cut over the years, so we have not been able to do as much as we wanted to," says Pridmore. "We usually get £150,000 a year but that was cut by £50,000 last year, which meant we had to let two people go."

It has attracted investment from the Platinum Trust and secured a Big Lottery Fund grant, but it's the core funding from the Department of Health that is integral to its survival.

"The problem for us is that if we keep developing projects... they take more management and



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they also take a certain amount of our core funding – core funding which we are not getting enough of,” she says.

Ironically, UKDPC is one of the first groups the government turns to when looking at disability issues.

“We have found the Department of Health continually wants to consult with us but they don’t want to pay for our expertise,” she says.

But it is not just funding that is proving a major barrier.

Janet Seymour Kirk, secretary of the Labour Party Disabled Members Group, is critical of what she calls a “lack of passion” among current UKDPC members.

She says: “When we had something to actually fight against, a government that wasn’t moving forward, there were a lot more people to come and bang on the door. Now that we have a semi-open door, there are not as many people that want to come and do a different type of fight – not conflict, but mediatory.

“It seems that some of our members seem to be lacking the passion they used to have about the movement. Some opportunities are missed. Although we have that open door, I wonder if we are using it to its full potential.”

Despite these problems, it is certainly seen as a major player by UK political parties.

Jeremy Hunt, shadow minister for disabled people for the Conservatives, is full of praise for an organisation he calls “extraordinary”.

“The most important thing they have shown me is that if you are making policy to deal with disability it should be written and driven forward generally by disabled people themselves,” he says.

Danny Alexander, his Liberal Democrat opposite number, adds: “They have been a very determined and forthright group and have led in the debate. I think groups like [UKDPC] will play an important role in taking forward the disability debate over the next 25 years.”

Some parts of the disabled people’s movement, however, have criticised UKDPC for not being radical enough. One criticism is that member organisations do not have to be totally run by disabled people. Currently, groups must only be 75 per cent user-controlled.

Clair Lewis, a member of the Disabled People’s Direct Action Network, says: “I would agree with those in the movement [who say] that really it should be 100 per cent.”

She believes BCODP could have been more radical in the past, although “they are improving”. She says that its

The first 25 years

Stephen Bradshaw, a founder member of the British Council of Disabled People, who represented the Spinal Injuries Association at the first meeting in 1981



The mere creation of BCODP was a tremendous step forward for disabled people and I think it has achieved tremendous changes over the last 25 years.

At the moment, BCODP is not as important as it was when it first started, because its mere formation and early struggles were critical to changing public perceptions of disabled people in this country.

People are now widely using the concepts on which BCODP was based: the government, disability charities and, to an extent, the general public have absorbed many of the new words, feelings and ideas that have changed the culture of the country, although people generally still don’t understand the principles or ethos behind them.

However, BCODP is still not given the respect and recognition that it deserves. With its current difficulties, this is unlikely to change soon.

BCODP still has a role to play: to champion the changes that still need to be achieved for the full emancipation of disabled people and our full civil rights.

Yes, we now have the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) and other helpful legislation, and disabled people are happier with their position in society, despite the everyday problems and discrimination they still experience. But the problem for BCODP is that the closer you approach your target, the more difficult it is to close the final gap.

BCODP’s task of securing finance and support is getting difficult as disabled people’s prospects improve. Thus, young disabled people don’t get involved politically as much because they can get jobs, have more money, and have greater opportunities.

The everyday fight to survive as a disabled person has become less critical. It is more difficult to galvanise people to fight hard for the things that still need to improve. Galvanising disabled people is critical to BCODP’s survival.

radical stance over the Welfare Reform Bill was a step in the right direction.

“It was nice to work officially alongside BCODP on the Coalition Against the Welfare Reform Bill,” she says. “I have never seen BCODP do anything as radical and as close to what we do before.”

She also praises the high profile of two women within UKDPC – Anne Pridmore and Simone Aspis.

“They have two radical disabled women in there right now working in such important roles on real, taking-to-the-streets campaigns. Just knowing that is a good thing,” she says.

Although Lewis would have liked more support from BCODP in the past for DAN’s direct action protests, she does accept they both have different roles to play in the movement.

“They do the round table stuff; that’s part of the deal. Most organisations cannot actively support us because we break the law.”

Whereas DAN is a network of individuals who take part in direct action protests that skirt

The next 25 years

Rachel Hurst, Director of Disability Awareness in Action and chair of BCODP, 1985-7



The world has changed since BCODP was founded in 1981. This year, many doors are open that have never been open before.

We have the DDAs 1995 and 2005 as a basis for protecting us against discrimination; and the Life Chances report to support independent living, the social model of disability, a CIL in every area, a body of disabled experts to advise government and equal participation promised by 2025.

The UK government has been very proactive in the development of a UN convention on rights for disabled people and we have the public sector duty to transform local and national public services. It is in the light of these significant positives that we can view the UK Council after another 25 years.

I have a dream that, by 2031, a well-funded UK Council should have indisputable status as the democratic voice of disabled people, with a UK-wide membership of all those CILs and other rights-based groups of disabled people, working to agreed objectives and strategies.

It will focus on campaigns to empower disabled people, to change attitudes, to ensure enforcement of rights, to subvert the eugenic attitudes of genetic advances and work with its brothers and sisters around the world.

The council will be working with government and other human rights agencies to monitor and enforce the full inclusion of disabled people in society. The large commercial and charitable service providers will either be working to a rights and justice agenda and in co-production with disabled people, or will be out of business. They certainly will not be considered to be speaking on our behalf.

There will still be disabled people (and others) facing inequality and poverty. Attitudes, and the resulting behaviour, take more than 25 years to change. But more and more people will be proud to be disabled.

It may even be that parents will celebrate the birth of a disabled baby as they would any other child. Is this a dream – or will it be reality?

mission

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CELEB SCENE

DANNY CRATES

When you find out how many people are dying on our roads you may think twice before you take a risk

Since my last column, I competed in the world championships in Holland. This event has always been tough for me, as I had never won an individual medal – even though I have at the Paralympics, World Cup and European levels.

Pre-race I had my usual nerves about the competition ahead. That is the norm for me, but only getting two hours sleep the night before left me even more worried. Thankfully, I was able to step up to the mark and take the title on the day.

Since then I have been enjoying a short break from running, which has been far too short, especially as I am getting married in December.

On 7 November, I was at the official launch of the Brake road safety week, and this year the theme (if you can call it a theme) was young drivers.

I, like so many people, often open the newspaper and read of a young person who

has lost their life or been seriously injured in a traffic accident.

Also present were two parents who have lost children in road traffic accidents. They now do volunteer work for Brake. My own parents were lucky, they still have their son, but I cannot comprehend the emotions they went through when they got the call about my accident at 4am.



It was even worse because I had my accident in Australia, so they had to arrange flights and visas. They were on the plane within 12 hours. I cannot begin to imagine how distressing that long flight was.

I was astounded when I heard the statistics at the Brake event.

Every day, nine people are

killed on UK roads, and ten times that number are seriously injured.

In 2004, 442 drivers under 29 lost their lives. I will not follow that with any more harrowing statistics. All I will do is urge you to take a look at the website*.

Next time you feel the need to take a risk, think again. Is it really worth it?

We finished the launch with photos next to the wreckage of a car in which a young driver lost their life.

Seeing the car made me feel very lucky to have been able to walk away from my accident, even if I was carrying my severed arm (*pictured left, the car in which I crashed*).

Just looking at that car, knowing that someone lost their life in it, really brings home how dangerous our roads are. Although I lost an arm, I got away alive. Sadly, this is not the case for far too many drivers.

* www.roadsafetyweek.org.uk

Danny is a Paralympic champion and regularly appears on television

WORLD VIEW

ABIGAIL LOCK

North Korea must be forced to improve its human rights record

In 2003, North Korea adopted a new law

guaranteeing the political and social rights of disabled people. However, anecdotal reports from defectors indicate a huge gap between legislation and implementation.

A UN report describes how disabled people are "sent away" from the capital, Pyongyang, while people with learning difficulties are detained in camps known as "Ward 49" under "harsh and subhuman conditions".

It quotes a South Korean report that describes how North Korean authorities "are practising merciless discrimination" against disabled people, by sending them to camps, where they are segregated by impairment.

Defectors apparently testify that people with restricted growth are subjected to a eugenics programme in which they are confined to camps, not allowed to have children and, in some circumstances,

undergo forced sterilisation.

The (South Korean) Korean Institute for National Unification suggests disabled people are "not allowed to live in places where foreigners visit frequently because disabled people are said to give a bad impression of the country".

The report's author, Vinit Muntarbhorn, has repeatedly written to the North Korean government about his concerns, but the government will not communicate with him or allow him to visit.

More must be done to raise awareness and as 3 December is the International Day of Disabled Persons, I encourage you to write to your MP, and ask them to encourage the government to ratify the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Hopefully, the UN convention will be used to force the North Korean government to improve its appalling record on the human rights of disabled people.

Abigail is parliamentary affairs officer at Scope

TOP TALK

PHIL FRIEND

Voluntary codes of practice may improve flights for disabled people but laws would enforce real change

Some of you will have noticed the article in DN (DN November, page 1) concerning Ryanair's decision to alter their rules concerning compensation for damage to wheelchairs.

Other rule changes make it possible for disabled passengers to claim compensation when they are not allowed to board a flight they have booked and where there are delays or cancellations.

I've been a supporter of DN's Flight Rights campaign, which has focused on the problems disabled passengers face when wheelchairs and other medical equipment are damaged or lost.

I've long marvelled at the airlines' ability to wreck or lose our wheelchairs and then claim that they are not responsible for compensation.

So, I suppose I should be grateful for what appears to be good news. Call me cynical, but I am unconvinced.

The voluntary code of

practice, *Access to Air Travel for Disabled People*, published in March 2003, does not appear to be making any difference.

In paragraph 6.37, the code states: "Airlines should also ensure that the wheelchairs are protected and kept intact, for example, by placing them in protective wrapping before they are placed in the aircraft hold. It is essential that staff involved in this process have received training on handling wheelchairs".

'Until we have legal protection, airlines will continue to treat us as second-class citizens'

This prompts a couple of questions. First, how many of you who have recently travelled by air had your wheelchair carefully packed in protective wrapping before it was placed in the hold?

Second, for all the disability equality trainers who are

her head in resignation as I scale refrigerated compartments and launch items at the display rather than give in and ask for help.

Stubborn? Me? Surely not. If I can't reach something, I have been known to give up and buy the closest reachable alternative rather than admit defeat, which could mean some interesting substitutions when it comes to gifts.

Socks are fine, but crystal vases and expensive crockery are off the agenda for safety reasons.

Christmas shopping brings added excitement... the small children who have been dragged from shop to shop all day, with only sugared bribes as compensation, are easily distracted by the appearance of what could be an extremely pissed-off elf. It certainly adds the finishing touch to my Christmas shopping frustrations. And don't even talk to me about pantomimes.

Ivy, 18, lives in London and is acting editorial assistant at DN



YOUTH SPEAK

IVY BROADHEAD

Christmas is a time for joy... and a shopping nightmare

Christmas is coming, the goose is getting fat and hundreds of people have decided to hit the shops on the same day.

The endless crowds, the overpriced gift-sets that gather dust until the new year charity-shop run, the death battles over this year's best-selling piece of plastic in the toy aisle – Christmas shopping takes its toll on even the most enthusiastic non-disabled consumer, but for me it's a bit more of a challenge.

Shopping of any kind can be an assault course. Can I climb up the supermarket shelves and knock down the box of cereal I want, without it landing on my head? Or will the nice Tesco ladies take pity and get it down for me?

It's almost disappointing when I can actually reach the item I'm after; where's the fun in that?

My housemate, who is also of restricted growth, shakes

reading this, how many of you have provided awareness training to baggage handlers or other staff working at airports around the country?

Research undertaken by the Department for Transport and published in August this year states that "various steps need to be taken in the aviation industry. More encouragement is needed for companies to follow the Code and travel agency and airline staff should be given more training for disability awareness".

This suggests that, although the airlines say they are providing disability equality training to their employees, it does not appear to be getting through to the baggage handlers or other people dealing with customers.

Until we have legal protection, which is enforceable through the courts, airlines will continue to treat us as second-class citizens, whether we paid business class or not!

Phil is chair of RADAR and co-owner of disability consultancy Churchill, Minty and Friend

Veil of silence

A Muslim teaching assistant sparked controversy after she was suspended for refusing to remove her veil in class. Iram Farooq, who is deaf and a Muslim, explains why veils can cause an extra communication barrier for deaf children

should have a rigorous support system, so that that child does not become socially and academically excluded.

Muslim women should understand that wearing a veil could create communication barriers for a child who is deaf, or whose second language is English.

I was born deaf and had no sense of my roots or my identity when I was younger. I had no voice and was excluded from the Asian community because they underestimated me.

I found it difficult to communicate with and understand a Muslim woman who was wearing a veil. I could only hear mumbling.

While I was growing up, my hearing improved slightly, so I was sent to the mosque to learn about Islam. I was taught by a Muslim lady who wore a veil.

Within the Muslim community, men and women must be segregated. During the class, the teacher would remove her veil and simply wear a headscarf, because she was surrounded only by females.

This proves that there are solutions in situations like this in a school. For example,

arranging a British Sign Language interpreter would ensure two-way communication between the deaf child and the teacher. Or the school could

'Muslim women should understand that wearing a veil could create communication barriers for a child who is deaf'

allocate a room without any men present, so the teacher could remove her veil.

Through research into the Islamic religion I have come to realise that veils do not oppress

Muslim women. They allow them to maintain their modesty, so they can move freely within the community without compromising their convictions.

As Britain is a multi-cultural society, different cultures and religions should learn, understand and be tolerant of each other. There should be a clear distinction between where a veil is acceptable and where it is unacceptable.

Furthermore, more Muslim women should be encouraged and supported to come forward and put their views across, forcing the media to take them more seriously.



Veiled debate: BSL-user Iram Farooq (above) says a veil can create a communication barrier for deaf children but, with the right support in schools, there are ways around the problem. Aishah Azmi (left), the teaching assistant who brought the issue to national attention.



Since the story of the Muslim teaching assistant who insisted on wearing a veil reached the top of the political agenda, I have been in two minds.

On one hand, as a deaf Muslim female, I believe that no-one has a right to tell Muslim women to remove their veils. Ultimately, this is a personal and religious question, not a political one.

On the other hand, I can see why a Muslim woman wearing a veil can create difficulties if they are working with deaf

children, or those whose second language is English.

After all, human interaction relies on 80 per cent non-verbal communication and 20 per cent verbal communication.

Non-verbal is the most powerful form of communication, so a deaf person, or a child whose second language is English, needs to see someone's entire mouth to lip-read, observe gestures and use facial expressions to work out what is being said.

If a deaf child has a teacher who wears a veil, the school

KEY NOTES
ANDY RICKELL
Your mission, should you choose to accept it...

When I think about the new Commission for Equality and Human Rights (CEHR), the theme tune to *Mission Impossible* plays in my head. It has to be the hardest job given to any public body in Britain.

To offer leadership across six diverse strands of human identity and include human rights is hard enough, let alone achieving it in a country not used to a human rights culture.

All of this within a public environment of massive institutional discrimination and ignorance, screaming media headlines about immigration, fundamentalist religion, human rights' rulings and political correctness. It is an attempt to address many of society's ills all at once and it is not a job for faint-hearted liberals.

For disabled people, the creation of the CEHR could be both the best of times, and the worst of times.

On the bright side, the new body will recognise disability as an equality and human rights issue alongside race and gender for the first time in

'For disabled people, the creation of the CEHR could be both the best of times, and the worst of times'

British culture. The CEHR will also help on issues of double discrimination.

However, the CEHR replaces the Disability Rights Commission (DRC), which focused solely on disability at national level. The DRC was led by a majority of disabled people, which will not be

replicated in the new body.

The issue for disabled people is how to get the best from the CEHR.

We know that Trevor Phillips, chair of the Commission for Racial Equality, will be the CEHR's new chair and that up to 15 commissioners and a chief executive will be in place by the end of the year, so it can open in October 2007.

The law requires at least one commissioner to be a disabled person, and there must be a disability committee for at least five years.

We must educate the commission about the inequality and human rights abuses that disabled people face, so they are considered. It may sound like an impossible mission but it's up to us to make it possible.

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Letters to the Editor

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'Ross's joke was disgusting'



I saw John Pring's response to Jonathan Ross's "joke" about Heather Mills-McCartney (pictured, left).

I'm glad I'm not the only person who is disgusted at the ongoing media hate campaign against this woman.

Recently, I saw her on TV visiting amputees. She told the presenter that the comment she found most wounding was when a magazine said the best thing that ever happened to her was losing her leg. Although I am not an amputee, I haven't had a day free from pain since October 1988, so can empathise.

Whatever sins Heather Mills-McCartney may have committed in her personal life she has expunged them a thousand times over.

How many amputees has



Jonathan Ross visited? How much money have the tabloids who sneer at "Lady Mucca" raised for anti-landmine campaigns? How much have these hatemongers done to raise awareness of animal suffering?

A Baron, Sydenham, London

I am sorry that the comments made by Jonathan Ross (pictured, right) angered you, but I feel that you should accept them as being aimed at Heather Mills-McCartney only. No reference to members of the public, disabled or otherwise, was made by Jonathan Ross.

Heather Mills-McCartney does not deserve any support in her unjust quest to capture millions of Sir Paul McCartney's fortune.

Julian Downton, by email

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Volunteering: Slavery or springboard?

In Scope's *Time to get equal* page from the last issue (DN, November, page 18), it said that "David Bourroughs has cerebral palsy (CP) and has been a volunteer at Scope for the past six months". It's nice to see that nothing has changed.

Despite their rhetoric and declarations that it's time to get equal, Scope has not moved an inch if they are still using disabled people as cheap – and in David's case, free – labour.

If they are so determined to achieve equality why not stop using people like David and pay him? If he can volunteer for six months there is obviously work for him to do.

Prior to working for DN, I was a receptionist for Scope. I have no doubt that this was a stunt to put a person with CP on

the frontline. Why else would someone with a degree be employed to answer the phone?

There is a saying, "the more things change, the more they stay the same". How true this is of Scope. Fifty years on and still clueless.

Dan Batten, former editorial assistant, Disability Now

David replies: I have been volunteering at Scope for six months to gain experience in a field of work for which I have no qualifications.

Through volunteering at Scope, I am gaining the skills and confidence which I will need to pursue my chosen career. Rather than Scope 'using' me, I am, if anything, using them as a springboard into my chosen career.

I happen to know that I am far from free labour for Scope. They pay my travel expenses because the government has not extended the Access to Work scheme to disabled volunteers.

Over the last two years, the number of disabled staff at Scope has risen from just over three per cent of the total workforce to just under 20 per cent. So things have changed.

Thanks for your concern, but you can keep it. Scope is moving on and I am pleased to hitch a ride for a while as, like most young people, I work out what I want to do with my life. But maybe I'll hang around in case they want to mistreat me by asking me to interview a gorgeous pop star again... David Bourroughs, Scope volunteer

Let my chair board

I am a wheelchair user and I waited quite a while for one of Stagecoach's disabled-friendly buses (DN, November, letters) only to find it would not take wheelchairs because there wasn't room.

I had to hire a disabled-friendly taxi, which cost me twice as much.

Mrs M Hopkinson, Notts

Cycles a threat too

I read the story on compulsory insurance for scooters (DN, November, page 3). When the consultation takes place, I hope DN will also campaign for cycle insurance.

Disabled people face daily risks when sharing the pathways with cyclists. Should injury occur, guess who gets the bill? Jean Fraser, TALK (NE) Laryngectomees Association

Invite everyone to the disability debate

Reading November's issue of DN was like being invited to a debate without knowing the subject. It felt like there was a group of disabled people who are the disability movement and then there's all the rest of us.

I want to know what the movement actually stands for?

There are thousands of disabled people, like myself, who cope with daily discrimination. We attempt to get the things we are now entitled to, thanks to the people who fought for the Disability Discrimination Act, but are not part of a movement as such.

If the movement wants more people involved, it would be good to use DN as a forum to discuss what the issues really are. Rebecca Shtasel, Brighton

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Social model hero or villain?

I wonder if Peter Beresford actually read Tom Shakespeare's book before trashing it so thoroughly.

One of Shakespeare's aims is to reassert the importance of ongoing research into disability, rather than relying on the social model.

Are disabled people oppressed? That's a question the social model can't answer because it defines disabled people as oppressed.

This sort of lazy thinking went into the social model. It has functioned as an escape via theory from the unpleasantness of disabled reality, for it allowed disability academics an imaginary level of discourse wherein the physicality of impairment could be denied.

The whole theoretical edifice of the social model has been built on this denial, for denial of impairment is denial of reality.

Tom Shakespeare has written a valuable guide to rebuilding a research agenda into the reality of disabled people's lives.

Michael Morgan, Belfast



What's going on here? Tom Shakespeare (pictured, above) writes that the social-model of disability is at a "dead end" in his new book, *Disability Rights and Wrongs* (DN, November, page 37).

I accuse Tom of attempting to assassinate the foundation stone of the modern disability movement. Surely he recognises inclusion for all?

He says that "removing barriers is not enough to liberate all disabled people or lift everyone out of poverty". And yet Tom's publication remains inaccessible to a sector of the disabled community because it only comes in a print version.

Tom, as a disability activist and leader in this field, should have ensured that his book was available to everyone. Or has Tom sold out to the commercial model of disability?

Colin Fowler, disability consultant, via email

web watch

Have your say and join others chatting at www.disabilitynow.org.uk

The problem with wheelchairs

My biggest problem with wheelchairs is that when alterations are done, the price goes up by hundreds and I end up with a wheelchair which looks great, yet is so far from my price range I cannot afford it. Robn

My wheelchair is so heavy that my wrists became weak, even though I am only pushing myself around the house. Sexy Erica

I would like to see more wheelchairs in different colours. I am a 20-year-old girl and it took me ages to find a pink one – I found it on eBay in the end. It is so hard to find any disability aids that are in bright colours. I would also like a horn so that people get out of my way. Cat

Unfair blue badge fine

I have been fined by my local council in Wandsworth for displaying my mum's blue badge the wrong way up! Yasmin

This happened to me a while ago, so I spoke to a traffic warden about it. They said the blue badge has to be placed on the dashboard at either end, with the clock facing out – it does state this in the blue badge book. It makes it easier for wardens to check the badges as they walk along the front of the cars. If they cannot see it, they can call it an obstruction. It is a bit pathetic, but unfortunately they are the rules. I picked up a blue badge holder, which ensures it is always facing the right way, from eBay for about £3.99. You can also get them at some local markets and lots of other shops. pink_angel

backchat

• Perhaps, on reflection, it wasn't such a great idea for our new acting editor to offer critical remarks to the Press Association (PA) after Jonathan Ross made a disablist joke at the expense of Heather Mills-McCartney.

Despite PA accurately reporting that John Pring talked about "disabled people", he was quoted in the tabloids discussing "the disabled". Perhaps a slip of the tabloid keyboard, or maybe another reminder of how far DN's Hacked Off campaign has to go.

But *back chat* was also amused to find Pring's comments inspiring a column by rent-a-rant journalist Rod Liddle in *The Spectator*.

Apparently, Liddle feels that, as disablist jokes are now considered "offensive" and "socially unacceptable", that makes them funnier.

Back chat is a big fan of freedom of speech, but while disablist hate crime, bullying and discrimination are rife, we're happy staying on the other side of the comedy fence from the Rosses and Liddles of this world.

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Cameron on the warpath



Reaching out: David Cameron meets Clare Angus and her daughter Eilidh at the headquarters of Capability Scotland in Edinburgh

He has a disabled son and is the first party leader to view disability as a policy priority – just don't mention the 's' word. Elizabeth Choppin talks exclusively to David Cameron

Watch out. David Cameron, the leader of the Conservative party, is on the warpath.

At 40, this Old Etonian has ascended the Tory ranks at an astonishing pace – rising from MP, to shadow deputy leader of the Commons, to shadow education secretary, to party leader, all in less than five years.

And meeting him in the flesh you can see why. He's approachable. He's intelligent. He doesn't travel with a huge entourage. He's Dave.

But as you would expect, he does mean business. *DN* learned – during a 20 minute interview on a flight to Edinburgh – he might even lose his temper if crossed on his views about disability.

In the past, Mr Cameron has been accused of having wishy-washy policies; but as the parent of a small child with epilepsy and cerebral palsy, disability is not one of them.

He has been vocal about disability issues since his days as a backbench MP and has only picked up momentum as he has risen through the party.

Armed with first-hand experience, Mr Cameron has come out swinging on the need for a simplified benefits system, which he says currently requires a "PhD in paperwork"; more respite care for families of disabled children; and, controversially, the role of special schools.

While his passion for the issues has sent positive ripples through the disability world, many disabled people are not yet sure what the future would hold under a prime minister Cameron.

Mentioning his new "compassionate Conservatism" has been known to elicit cackles and guffaws from disability campaigners who consider it a contradiction in terms.

But David Cameron has stepped up as a party leader who says he would make disability a top priority – and for that reason, disabled people should know what he stands for.

To start, he would like to see a stop to the "endless assessments" that disabled children and their families go



'It drove me crazy that we couldn't get a disabled parking badge until our child was two years old'

through in order to secure services. He says his own experiences with his son, Ivan, have taught him that it is not easy to navigate the system.

"You really need to be told quite early on, 'look, this is what to expect, this is what you're entitled to, this is what you should get,'" he says with the fervour of someone who

has been there.

"Instead, it's a permanent battle – fighting your way down the high street of services bashing on all of the doors, whereas actually, the doors should open more automatically."

Seemingly small things can make life very difficult for families with disabled children, he says.

"It drove me crazy that we couldn't get a disabled parking badge until our child was two years old. When you've got a severely epileptic child with cerebral palsy, it's very difficult to use public transport and you need that badge straight away."

Cameron thinks the solution is to move towards a one-stop shop for assessments and benefits, but it is not clear yet how this would work in practice.

He also feels that without adequate respite services, families of disabled children "start to fall apart".

"My own experience, definitely, is a permanent reminder of what families less fortunate than mine are coping with, and that's a good reminder to have," he adds.

Cameron speaks of "social responsibility" from family, businesses and individuals as the key to real change

for disabled people.

He does not feel that it is solely up to government, and efforts such as Lord Ashley's Independent Living Bill, to secure more rights for disabled people.

"We must not fall into the trap of thinking this is all about passing laws," he says.

For example, he thinks making a business case for employers would be the most effective way to get more disabled people into jobs.

"BT have found that the disabled people they employ have far better retention records and stay much longer, so it's reducing their costs as a business," he says.

"It's when that sort of understanding goes through the business world that we're much more likely to get rid of discrimination against disabled people than by politicians passing another law."

"Yes, you do need the framework of law," he adds, "which I think the 1995 and 2005 Act provide. Then there are some specific things that the government itself needs to do, but we must not think that alone is enough."

The need for better employer practices and adequate respite care are things most disabled people can agree on.

But one of David Cameron's ideas has not been quite so well received by the disability movement – namely, his stance on inclusive education.

Cameron has never tried to skirt around his staunch belief that special schools should stay open as a way to preserve "parental choice".

He says he was outraged when Ivan's special school, in west London, was threatened with closure.

"In my view, there has been a lack of parental choice and the law has become a bit imbalanced in favour of inclusion," he says.

"The mistake was to think that inclusion for all and ending special schools was somehow progress. To me, equality is not stuffing every child in the same class, in the same room, saying, 'right, you're all being treated equally'."

Cameron admits that keeping children in "separate compartments" is not ideal, but feels that special school settings should be encouraged – not condemned.

His patience wears thin when pressed about whether disabled children should be segregated in special schools

when mainstream provision could be as well-resourced and inclusive as it is under authorities such as Newham.

"I think this word segregation is pejorative and wrong," he retorts, obviously annoyed. "I look at my own case, with my son, who needs a lot of special care, special attention and special services. It wouldn't be possible to do all those things in a mainstream school."

"For him, a special school that has given the love, the attention, the therapy and the education he needs, has been an absolute godsend. I certainly don't think my son is being segregated. I'm delighted he's in a school that meets his needs."

In fact, at one point when we are discussing special schools, he apologises for "getting rather angry about it".

"As a parent, I feel very strongly about it and when they tried to close my son's special school I know how damn strongly I felt about it," he growls, pounding his fist.

The only problem this could pose for Cameron, as a champion for disabled people, is that much of the disability world holds a different view.

While campaigners acknowledge special schools have a part to play until the capacity of mainstream schools is developed, "inclusion for all" remains the ultimate goal.

So what do representatives of disabled people say about David Cameron?

Without discounting the positive feedback he has received, some key disability figures have voiced concern

about whether he has truly grasped the social model of disability.

Andy Rickell, Scope's executive director for diversity, politics and planning, says that Cameron could either be a "great advocate" or a "serious hindrance" for disabled people, based on whether he can acquire a more thorough understanding of the social model.

"I anticipate, like most people, he has something to learn about putting people in the human rights box instead of the medical box," says Rickell.

To me, equality is not stuffing every child in the same class saying, 'right, you're all being treated equally'

"He needs to also see the perspective of other parents of disabled children who have taken a more rights-based, inclusion-based approach."

But Cameron is adamant that practical, medical issues be given due priority.

He says: "In this debate, we must not forget that there are some severely disabled people for whom the most important items on the agenda are health care, respite care, care in the home – those things."

Bert Massie, chairman of the Disability Rights Commission, agrees with Cameron on that front.

Massie says that healthcare is "hugely important" and that it is possible to give it a lot of attention within the social model framework.

He says that Cameron is

naturally focused on the personal care of his son, Ivan, and that a more involved understanding of the social model will come as Ivan grows older and faces different types of barriers.

In terms of education policy, Massie says: "If you begin to analyse the differences between Tories and Labour, it might not be as great as it appears."

Massie says he is waiting for a Conservative manifesto before he makes any final decisions, and encourages disabled people to be vocal about what they want and think.

He says: "The Tories are playing around with ideas – and that's not a bad thing."

So what would David Cameron say to the sceptics who do not believe he would make a difference for disabled people?

"Hold our feet to the fire and make sure we put these pledges into a manifesto and make sure that we meet them," he says.

"I think the Conservative party is doing serious work on disability... There is a body of people in the party, including the leader, who are interested in these issues, and passionate about these issues, and would carry that through to government."

And with that, our plane touches down on the runway and David Cameron is off to make a speech on disabled people and employment – and back on his warpath.

● *The Conservatives have launched a new website forum to obtain feedback from disabled people; visit: www.thedisabilitychallenge.com*

Who is he?

David Cameron, 40, was born in London. He has been the leader of the main opposition party since 2005.

After attending Oxford University, he worked in the Conservative research department from 1988-1992, and as a special adviser to the Treasury and Home Office from 1992-1994.

He was then head of corporate affairs at media group Carlton Communications from 1994-2001.

He is married to Samantha, with whom he has two sons and a daughter.

They split their time between London and a home in his constituency of Witney, west Oxfordshire.

DC on disability: 2003-2006

October 2003 Commons debate on care for families with disabled children: "When events turn lives upside down, people need to know straight away what benefits and services are available and the level of service they should expect. Services should lock on to them like a laser-guided missile as soon as their child's needs and their own needs are assessed."

2004 Awarded the E-Politix Disability Champion Award.

May 2004 Commons debate on special schools: "The policy of inclusion, while right in principle for most children, is wrong in practice for some children. Some local education authorities are possibly over zealous in their pursuit of inclusion."

October 2005 Regarding the birth of his disabled son, Ivan: "The news hits you like a freight train... You are depressed for a while because you are grieving for the difference between your hopes and the reality. But then you get over that because he's wonderful." (*Focus: Can Boy Wonder save the Tories? The Sunday Times, October 9, 2005*)

January 2006 Told Jeremy Hunt, his new shadow minister for disabled people, that he had "the most important job of all".

February 2006 Joked that the benefits system requires a "PhD in paperwork", while speaking at the launch of the Disability Rights Commission's campaign, Are we taking the dis?

April 2006 "Short-break carers can reduce the social isolation of many disabled children by increasing opportunities for them to take part in leisure activities, play and meet new people. Meanwhile, parents get a break from the demands of caring."

June 2006 Said he would "reform, replace or scrap" the Human Rights Act if the Tories come to power.

Summer 2006 At the first of five policy seminars the party held with disability groups: "I am struck as a constituency MP just how many young disabled adults are living at home with their parents. They want to have some independence. There's a real problem in terms of provision and cost."

October 2006 During a speech on welfare reform at Capability Scotland's headquarters: "Instead of the half-dozen different benefits a disabled person can receive, each with its own conditions and application form, we want to be moving towards a single assessment procedure and perhaps even a single benefit."

October 2006 Launched www.thedisabilitychallenge.com – a forum for disabled people to give feedback to the Conservative party.



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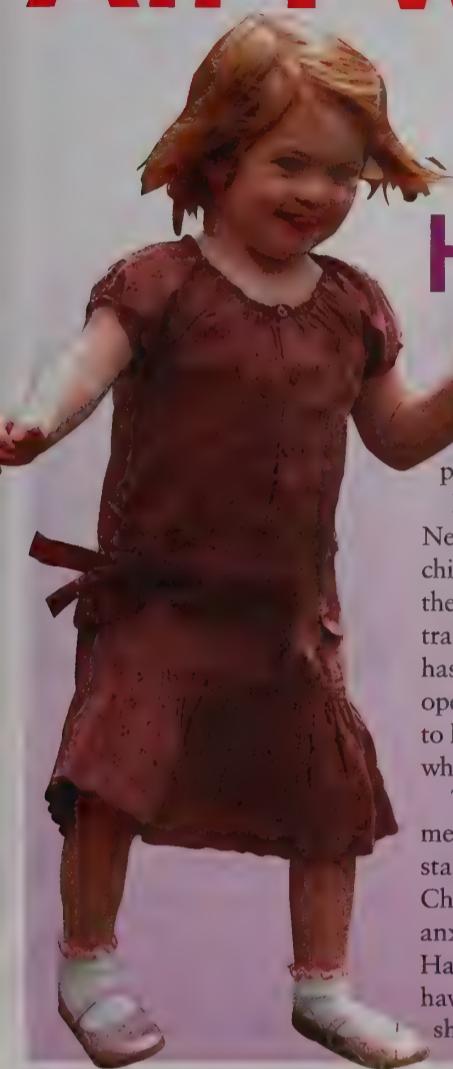
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All I want for Christmas...



DN revisits the people who featured in some of the year's biggest stories and asks them how they are spending the festive season

Hannah Carty

Since her heart transplant in February, Hannah Carty is blossoming, says her proud mother Elaine.

Hannah, who lives in Newcastle, became the second child with Down's syndrome in the UK to have a heart transplant this February. She has recovered from the major operation and is adjusting well to life at a mainstream school, which she started in September.

The festive season will be merry for the Carty family, a stark contrast to last Christmas when they were anxiously waiting for Hannah's transplant, only to have their wait extended after she developed an infection.

Hannah's health problems started when she was diagnosed with leukaemia at one year of age. Months of chemotherapy damaged her heart and triggered a stroke, leaving her reliant on a machine to power her heart and lungs. But Hannah, who turned four in November, is now walking, talking and eating well.

For the first time in two years, Hannah will spend Christmas at home and she will be spoilt rotten, says Elaine.

"She is now at the age where she can enjoy Christmas and all the presents that she gets," she says.

And this year there will be a new bicycle – her first – waiting for her under the tree on Christmas morning.

is still waiting for a decision from the Home Office on whether he will be sent back.

He says he worries every time he "signs on", or does his monthly check-in, and feels too nervous to ask for more money from the council or adaptations to his flat. "I'm so confused, so distressed and so discouraged," he says, adding that his health has deteriorated because he does not have what he needs.

But Peter still feels the situation is worse in Kenya.

"I cannot think of going back because it's so dreadful. There is still that social stigma. It's such a struggle."

He is also busy studying for his level four accountancy exams this month.

the UK in 2001 to seek asylum from his home in Kenya, where he said he was arrested and received death threats because of his campaigns for the rights of disabled people. He now lives in a council flat in Croydon with no accessible shower or loo. He

Sophie Morgan

A wheelchair-user since becoming paralysed in an accident at the age of 18, Sophie Morgan became a familiar face after she appeared on BBC2's *Beyond Boundaries* in October 2005.

She was one of 11 disabled people, with a range of impairments,

trekking across Nicaragua – a trip she now describes as "crazy".

Sophie also shared her experiences of rediscovering her sexuality after acquiring her impairment, for DN's Valentine's issue (February, 2006, page 26).

These days, Sophie is

Gillian McCarthy

On November 15, Gillian McCarthy "celebrated" ten years of living in a south Somerset field.

For nine of those years, Gillian, who has multiple chemical sensitivity (MCS), has been trying to persuade South Somerset District Council to build her a chemical-free home. But she has become tangled in a bureaucratic nightmare.

In September, DN reported how Gillian was facing the threat of eviction.

That threat is still hanging over her head as she prepares for another grim Christmas.

Gillian also has a number of other health conditions, including a tumour and a mobility impairment, but lives in an unheated wooden hut.

A week or so before speaking to DN, a third of her bedroom floor had been an inch and a half underwater.

She no longer has running water and the temperature in the hut has dipped to three below freezing. She also has frostbite in her right foot.

Despite all this, she is currently receiving no medical treatment, due to a long-running dispute with South Somerset Primary Care Trust.

When DN spoke to her, she had exhausted her supply of spring water – the only water she can drink – and hadn't eaten in two weeks.

Gillian used to love Christmas, but now it is just another hellish day like any



other. "I can't have visitors because I have no air filters and no treatment," she says.

"I can't even send people Christmas cards because I can't write them anymore. I can't even let my friends know what is happening.

"I used to sit and enjoy some good films but I can't do that now because I have no electricity. I used to be a Christmas nut, but it's too cold here for visitors."

Gillian, a biochemist, author and a world expert on horse nutrition, wants to reap something positive from her nightmare, and is hoping to find an organisation to take over her hypoallergenic garden and associated research*.

"Even if I cannot achieve my own survival, I am endeavouring to ensure that that research and that garden survives," she says.

"Apart from anything else, I don't want those bastards to bulldoze it all away or nick it all."

*To help, email: audrey@adcock.me.uk or founder@mcsinternational.org

Fulham. She has high hopes that her art will make her a fortune.

Although she insists that there are no more *Beyond Boundaries*-style expeditions on the cards – "Not if I can help it!" – she will be escaping the English winter this Christmas for a decent holiday.

"I'm going out to Australia to learn to scuba dive for about three weeks with my family," she says.



Santa flaws

They are some of the most sought after presents this Christmas and every child will want one. But just how accessible are this year's best-selling toys? Lisa McCarthy investigates

Leading toy store Hamley's, of Regent Street, London, kindly provided us with a selection for three toy lovers – Aminah Aslam, Cameron Russell and Carter Latif – to try out before they send off their all important Christmas lists to Santa Claus.

AMINAH

Aminah Aslam couldn't wait to get her hands on the Bratz Forever Diamondz doll.

A fan of sparkly jewellery, eight-year-old Aminah said: "It's lovely," as she quickly fastened a necklace around her own neck.

The doll's jewellery proved a bit trickier for Aminah, who has a visual impairment.



"The bag's really small and the bracelet; I can't really see them," she said. "The writing on the t-shirt is hard for me to see as well."

Putting the doll aside but remembering to put it at the top of her wish list, Aminah, with help from teacher Lamorna Jewell Gore, from Linden Lodge School, Wimbledon, tried out the next toy – the Aquadraw Deluxe.

It's a giant mat children can draw on with water-filled



pens, the pictures gradually fading away.

A keen artist, this was a favourite of Aminah's, but she did have some difficulty with it.

The two large stencils were big enough for her to see and thick and easy to feel. But the words and letters around the sides of the mat were too small.

The blue paint colour was also too light for Aminah.

"Bright yellow or green would have been better," said Aminah.

Next stop was the Tamagotchi, the 90s cyber pet which is making a comeback.

It's been updated, but you can still feed it and take it shopping.

It sounds impressive, but for Aminah it was completely inaccessible.

"The screen is too small and I can't read the instructions. They are tiny," she said.

Aminah found the Bedlam Cube Retro a little frustrating.

It's colourful and bright, but with 13 pieces to put together in a cube it can be quite tricky.

"I think six to eight pieces which were slightly bigger would make it easier for children like Aminah to see and solve," said Mrs Jewell Gore.

The Thomas the Tank Engine Megasketcher also left Aminah disappointed.

Aminah was quick to use the train-shaped stamps, but was

left frustrated.

"The pen is ok, but the stamps are too light. Also, the stamps are quite small so I can't make out which train it is unless it's really close up."

Marvin's Magic Presents Lights from Anywhere wasn't a favourite, either.

More of a stocking filler than a game, you are provided with two false thumbs that light up and disappear at will.

"I can't read the instructions. They are too small," she said. "It would be good if the lights on the thumbs were brighter."

Both the Brain Drain and the Cyberman Voice Changer mask were also given the thumbs down.

The 300 cards in the quiz game were totally inaccessible. "I need a magnifying glass to read the cards to play with this," she said.

The Cyberman mask has tinted eyes and therefore blurred her vision further.

"I'm sure it would be fun, but I can't really see out of it."

The final toy was the Star Wars Transformer, which combines to form a Millennium Falcon.

"The pieces are a bit fiddly and I can't always make them out," said an unimpressed Aminah. "I can't make out



some of the smaller figures either."

"Toys with lights and movement are the best type for children like Aminah with visual impairments," added Mrs Jewell Gore.

"A lot of children with visual impairments will place things in their mouths so they can make out the shape, which could be dangerous with some of these toys," she added.

CAMERON

"I'm saving that one till last," said Cameron Russell (above, middle) as he spied the Doctor Who Cyberman Voice Changer.

"That looks wicked!" added the seven-year-old, who has Asperger's syndrome.

A computer games fan, the youngster was keen to play with the Tamagotchi V3 pet and gave it top marks.

"I could play with this all day," said Cameron, happily pressing the beeping keys.

"It's one of those toys that would definitely stimulate him, which is good, as Cameron gets bored quickly," said mum Veronica.

A love of painting meant Cameron was also keen on the Aquadraw Deluxe set.

"It's good but it would be better with different coloured



pens," said Cameron.

But Veronica wasn't so sure.

"I think this would be exciting at first but I could see him getting bored quickly. Also, if he drew something really nice and then it disappeared he would get really annoyed."

The glowing thumbs in Marvin's Magic caused Cameron to smile but didn't keep his attention for very long.

However, the Bedlam Cube Retro kept Cameron transfixed. Throwing the pieces on to the floor, he set about trying to get them all back into the cube.

"This is quite difficult but it's fun. I think it will take me a while, but I'll do it. I like this game."

A fan of Thomas the Tank Engine, Cameron enjoyed drawing on the megasketcher.

"I'm good at this and it's fun," said Cameron. "But the colours are a bit boring. I won't play with it again."

He found the questions in Brain Drain a bit difficult and had to ask his mum to read some of them for him.

"These are really difficult," he said.

"We would have to get a friend to play this with Cameron and I could see him throwing a tantrum if his friend got the questions right and he

The toys they tried out:

Thomas Megasketcher
Age 3+ £25.99



Aquadraw Deluxe
Age 18 months+ £24.99



Brain Drain
Age 7+ £19.99



Bedlam Cube Age 3+ £13.99

Bratz Diamondz
Age 6+ £24.99



Marvin's Magic
Age 4+ £14.99

Christmas treats

Christmas is always an expensive time, what with presents to buy, cards to send and rising heating bills during the cold winter weather, so here is *DN*'s list of things to do this festive season that won't break the bank



CHRISTMAS MARKETS

1-2 December, The Fairtrade Christmas Fair (London). Web: www.worldfair.org.uk
 30 November-10 December, The Bath Christmas market (pictured left). Tel: 01225 396417; web: www.bathchristmasmarket.co.uk
 9-10 December, the North Shields Victorian Christmas Market. Web: www.victorianmarket.co.uk
 7-10 December, Lincoln



Christmas Market. Web: www.lincoln.gov.uk

CHRISTMAS LIGHTS

Oslo traditionally gives a Christmas tree to the people of London, which stands in Trafalgar Square until 6 January, with everyone welcome to attend the initial lighting ceremony on 7 December. Carol singers also gather in the square nightly 11-23 December. Web: www.london.gov.uk/trafalgar-square/events/xmas

SANTA'S GROTTO

Father Christmas will be in his Guildhall Grotto in Exeter until Christmas Eve, at the Guildhall Shopping Centre (entrance, toilets and most shops are wheelchair accessible). Web: www.exeter.gov.uk
 Kew Gardens is holding free late night openings 15 & 16 December, 4-9pm, with carols, Christmas lights, and Father Christmas, along with characters

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from its own festive pantomime, 5-7.45pm. Wheelchair access to gardens and buildings except the Palm and Temperate Houses. Tel: 020 8332 5655; web: www.rbgkew.org.uk

In Knightsbridge, Harrods' Santa (pictured far left) will be doling out free gifts to all visitors until Christmas Eve – expect long queues! Wheelchair accessible. Tel: 020 7730 1234; web: www.harrods.com

CHRISTMAS TALES

Festive story-telling at Munch Box at Kew Gardens (pictured left), 26 December 2006 – 1 January 2007, 1pm, 2pm & 3pm, details as before.

Yulefest: daytime stories at the Scottish Storytelling Centre in Edinburgh, with puppeteers, storytellers and songmakers. 16 December, 3-4pm. Partially wheelchair accessible (medieval John Knox House not accessible). Tel: 0131 556 9579; web: www.scottishstorytellingcentre.co.uk

CHRISTMAS FESTIVAL

Edinburgh's Green Christmas Festival, until 17 December 2006. Visit Santa in his grotto, create your own handmade cards and decorations, and visit the winter exhibition at the Royal Botanic Garden.

10.30am-12.30pm, 1.30pm-3.30pm, no booking required. Santa's grotto, £4, all other activities free. Garden and most buildings wheelchair accessible. Tel: 0131 552 7171.
 The Royal Horticultural Society's Woking centre is holding two Christmas weekends, with trees, wreaths and gifts for gardeners young and old, with mince pies, mulled wine and free children's activities. 9&10, 16&17 December, wheelchair accessible. Tel: 0845 260 9000; web: www.rhs.org.uk

Audio books

Whether looking for that last-minute gift or simply wanting to listen to a really good story while wrapping the presents, there are, once again, some splendid new audio books for all ages out in time for Christmas. The incomparable Martin Jarvis, a master of characterisation, greatly enhances the latest Dick Francis offering, the racing

"whodunit" *Under Orders* (Penguin). Another popular

actor, David Tennant, captures the suspense of Ken Follett's enthralling drama *Whiteout* (Macmillan) – a story of human betrayal set against a Christmas

backdrop. A more traditional seasonal offering,

Classic Ghost Stories (CSA), contains the work of historical literary names including Charles Dickens and Edgar Allan Poe. Ideal for those long winter evenings, they benefit enormously from Richard Pasco's deep, chilling tones. Another timely, but somewhat lighter release, is the Radio 4 full-cast dramatisation of the

much anticipated official sequel to JM Barrie's Peter

Pan, *Peter Pan in Scarlet*, by Geraldine McCaughrean (BBC Audio Books). Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* is often performed at this time of year but if you can't get to a theatre production, you can always enjoy the unabridged Naxos release. Narrated by David Horovitch, it brings to life the many extraordinary characters that have fascinated adults and children alike. Having enjoyed that, you won't want to miss the sequel, *Alice Through The Looking Glass* (also Naxos). Also guaranteed to put a smile on your face are the two Volumes of *Funny Anecdotes* (Hodder and Stoughton), delivered by 11 household names from the worlds of stage, screen and sport.

Happy Christmas listening!
 Vidar Hjardeng

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The full range listing can be viewed on the Disabled Living Foundation's Hamilton Index at www.dlf.org.uk. Or find B&Q online at www.diy.com.



Mike Rogers reviews one of the new "formula racing" models from SEAT and discovers that you don't need to drive it on a racetrack to enjoy its raucous sportiness

SEAT's new FR series includes the Leon, and I have tested the 2.0 litre T FSI version, in which T stands for turbo.

The Leon FR is their top-selling model and, after a week with it, I can see why.

The FR stands for formula racing, but even if you don't get a chance to try it on a circuit, it's a delightful car on the road.

Handle it quietly for the roads around town and it can be a docile and obedient servant, but open it up on a clear road and it can be exhilarating.

The Spanish SEAT company – part of the VW group – is known for its sporty products, and this Leon is no exception. Many drivers prefer a car with a bit of grunt, and disabled drivers are no different. If you have limited walking ability, being able to compete with other cars can be fair compensation – providing one stays within the safety margins.

This Leon is a sleek hatchback of medium size. I tested the five-door version, which has big doors for easy entry, good head height and includes excellent leg-room in the rear seats.

The FR's driving seat has quite stiff side wings to ensure good support at speed, but this makes sliding on to the seat a little more difficult. However, once you are on the move, these wings ensure a comfortable and snug fit. The seat can be raised or lowered easily.

Once seated, the instrument panel is straight ahead of you, with clear instruments visible through the adjustable steering wheel.

The panel is recessed into

a cover, which hides it, and the controls are back-lit at all times.

On the road, the Leon FR handles expertly. The windscreen wipers are intriguing – when not in use they are virtually invisible, providing a remarkably unobstructed view of the road.

The engine produces quite a raucous sound, reflecting the model's sporty nature. The stability of the car is secured by wide-profile tyres, but as with many sporty models, the Leon is a little bumpy on unsealed roads.

One afternoon, I drove across the country to visit my good friend and engineer Bill Blydenstein, whose opinions can always be valued – he is a former UK Saloon Car Champion.

After a drive around a country road circuit, he said it was one of the best cars we have tried in terms of drivability and sure-footedness – quite an accomplishment when you consider that we have tested over 400 models since the early 90s.

It's a long time since I last tested a SEAT, because I try to stick to the cars listed on Motability and the SEAT has only recently come onto the scheme.

The entry model Leon requires an advance payment of around £1,270 and its price on the road is £12,000. The Leon tested here comes at nearly £17,000 with an advance payment of about £2,000. That is quite a bit up on the entry model, but you get a lot for what you pay for. Many disabled drivers will find the more basic versions perfectly adequate for their needs.



Mike Rogers checks out the Leon's nooks and crannies



Insurance for all

Compulsory insurance for powered wheelchairs and scooters is set to become a reality. DN's motoring correspondent, Helen Smith, provides comprehensive cover on a vital issue

Some time next year, everyone with a motorized wheelchair or mobility scooter will have to purchase third party insurance, if a recommendation by the Department for Transport (DfT) comes into force.

Many disability organisations have campaigned for this over the years, but the DfT finally commissioned a report, which supported their calls.

The report found that compulsory insurance should apply to motorised wheelchairs and scooters used on pavements at speeds of up to 6.4kph and on roads of up to 12.8kph.

One of the main insurers for scooters and wheelchairs is Alexander Forbes, whose policies are underwritten by Allianz Cornhill. I spoke to Phil Brunten, one of their mobility managers, on what compulsory insurance would mean for disabled people.

Phil explained to me that we are now living in a claim culture – all you need to do is bump into someone in your chair and you could end up in court.

His company is currently dealing with a public liability claim of about £170,000 for a case in which a man reversed his scooter into another person. Fortunately, this scooter-owner had insurance, but if he hadn't, he could have been in severe financial trouble.

As well as covering you if you have an accident, most insurance policies cover your wheelchair or scooter in case of loss, damage or theft.

While some household insurance will cover damage or theft, it will not cover you if you injure someone. A powered wheelchair or scooter is classed as "mechanically propelled", so you will need a specific insurance policy.

Making sure that everyone who owns a scooter or powered wheelchair has insurance will not be easy. For a start, nobody really knows exactly how many

are in use in the UK. There's been an estimate of about 90,000 but it's thought to be a lot higher, because many people buy online or second-hand.

As an insurer, Phil says he is worried that people are buying completely unsuitable machines because of the lack of advice. There is also concern at the number of people being ripped off by salesmen who charge double what they are worth.

Currently, anyone who wants to drive a scooter can do so without sitting a driving test or eye examination. So, if you are partially sighted and have never driven a car in your life, there is nothing to stop you buying a scooter and driving it up a dual carriageway with no insurance.

However, there are no plans to bring in any laws to regulate who can or cannot drive a scooter.

Across Europe, regulations covering insurance vary. In the Netherlands, the minimum requirement is for third party cover and a yellow insurance plate must be attached to the back of the vehicle. In France, insurance is required for vehicles that go over 6km/h, but not for lower speeds, and in Ireland, scooters and wheelchairs must be covered by third party insurance.

Good insurance cover should cost about £50 per year from specialist insurers, but as with all insurance, it is worth shopping around.

INSURANCE

Alexander Forbes

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Motability



Dear Rachel

● love and loneliness ● personal problems ● advice and support

Rachel Wilson, who is disabled herself, has spent many years advising on disability matters. Write to her at *Disability Now*, 6 Market Road, London N7 9PW or email your problem to editor@disabilitynow.org.uk



Expensive winter

My 13-year-old daughter is severely disabled and needs the house to be warm all the time. I cannot afford the bills and I am very concerned about how I will manage this winter.

Hazarvi, by email

I have several suggestions. The first is to contact your local social services department and explain that you are having financial difficulties. They may be able to help in the short term if they determine you are in crisis now.

I also suggest that you contact the company which provides your heating and explain your situation to them. Many companies have priority schemes for households that have disabled and older people. They could restructure your bills and make payment easier.

There is also the Warm Front scheme, which provides grants to people in private or rented accommodation for loft insulation and other energy-saving measures in your home. This should help to keep the

house warm and reduce your heating costs. There are certain eligibility criteria. If you contact the scheme (the call is free) they can advise you whether you would qualify for a grant.

● *Warm Front Scheme, tel: 0800 316 6011 or visit: www.eagagroup.com/grants/warmfront/index.htm*

● *For details of DN's winter fuel campaign, visit: www.disabilitynow.org.uk*

Wheelchair grants

My daughter is 26 and has cerebral palsy. A lightweight wheelchair would help her, but they cost about £1,500 and I cannot afford one myself. Do you have any advice?

Lynda, address withheld

It is always worth contacting your local wheelchair service to see whether your daughter could obtain one through them.

If she is in receipt of Disability Living Allowance and depending on her current level of mobility, she may be eligible for a wheelchair. You would need a referral from a

physiotherapist or occupational therapist; they can be contacted through social services. They would provide the chair which best meets your daughter's needs.

There is a publication, produced by the Directory for Social Change (DSC), *A Guide to Grants for Individuals in Need*. This lists hundreds of charitable trusts, which provide grants for a range of purposes. A copy will be available from your local library or on the DSC website.

● *Directory for Social Change, tel: 08450 77 77 07 or visit: www.grantsforindividuals.org.uk*

Age discrimination

I am very concerned about the new age discrimination rules. Does this mean that I cannot specify an age when advertising for personal assistants?

Mary, by email

Under the new legislation, it is illegal to treat people less favourably in employment because of their age. This means that it is illegal to specify an age

Anger over appalling access

I have secondary progressive multiple sclerosis and cannot walk more than a few feet. I recently had to attend a conference at a hotel in Hull and the access was appalling. There was a flight of steps up to the entrance and no disabled access within the hotel. Where do I stand as far as the law is concerned with this? I want to make a complaint to the council.

Nina, Doncaster

The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) requires providers of goods and services (including hotels) not to discriminate against disabled people and to provide physical access to buildings.

From what you say, the hotel is clearly in breach of the DDA because it was inaccessible. Having a flight of steps is not a breach in itself as long as there is also access for people unable to use stairs.

You say that you want to raise a complaint with the council and by all means do so, but your complaint is best directed to the hotel. It is the hotel owner's responsibility to ensure that the provisions of the DDA are met. I suggest that you complain to the hotel. If they are unwilling to address the matter and make the reasonable adjustments, remind them that the law requires it and you will take legal action if necessary.

If the hotel does not meet its legal obligations, I suggest you contact the Disability Rights Commission.

● *Disability Rights Commission, telephone: 08457 622 633, textphone: 08457 622 644 or visit: www.drc-gb.org*

requirement in an advertisement for personal assistants. When selecting applicants you may not discriminate on the grounds of age alone.

However, it is reasonable and extremely important for you to select an applicant capable of the work you require, and age may have a bearing on this.

● *Age Concern, tel: 0800 00 99 66 or visit: www.ageconcern.org.uk*

Shower dilemma

My local housing association fitted a flat floor shower over my bath two years ago on the recommendation of my occupational therapist (OT). My arthritis is much worse now and the only relief I get from constant pain is having a warm bath. The housing association will not consider reinstalling my bath without another recommendation from my OT, but she says a bath will not suit my needs. I cannot pay for it myself.

Carol, Milton Keynes

If your OT is unwilling to recommend the reinstallation of your bath, you could explain to her the consequences of not having one and see if that sways her. You could also try discussing the matter with your GP. Your GP might agree that the benefits of a bath are significant and support your claim. They may also advise you on alternative methods of pain management.

Caring and working

I'm a full time carer with mental health problems. I also had a heart attack, which has left me with angina. I have been told that I must go for a medical before I return to

work. I cannot get someone to look after my disabled charge. How can I work and be a carer?

John, by email

You do not say who has asked you to attend a medical, but being asked to attend one does not mean that you can be forced back to work.

Your responsibilities as a carer, your angina and your own wishes must be considered when you undergo the medical.

I would suggest that you go to your GP and explain your anxiety. They may be able to support your claim. You could also contact MIND, who can give you further advice and support – especially given the added pressures of your caring responsibilities. If you contact their information line, they can put you in touch with your nearest support group.

● *MIND, tel: 0845 766 0163 or visit: www.mind.org.uk*



Help at the end of the phone

DN's telephone counsellor Lin Berwick gives disabled people and carers advice and support on personal and spiritual problems. Disabled herself, Lin is a psycho-therapeutic counsellor and Methodist local preacher, with a postgraduate diploma in homeopathic medicine. If you have something you need to discuss in confidence, talk to her on Mondays 6pm-10pm and Thursdays 1pm-5pm, tel: 01787 882 111.

Spotlight on Alice...

Alice (born December 2005) is a happy contented baby of White British and Albanian descent.

Alice has a loving nature with a ready smile on her face. She is a happy, contented baby and is thriving at her foster placement. She enjoys individual attention and has bonded really well with her foster carers and the children in the home.

Alice really enjoys her bath time and likes to play with colourful toys. She responds well with her foster carers and she has developed a healthy attachment to them.

Alice currently shows a developmental delay and has health needs. She is undergoing medical tests and awaiting results.

Alice's birth parents are unable to take care of Alice due to her mother's severe medical condition and learning difficulties.

Professional support from the Medical and Health agencies will be offered to the adopters.

If you could provide a loving home or would like more information on Alice, please contact Rubina Saiyed directly on



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*Child's name has been changed for legal reasons



ASK THE READERS

I have been diagnosed with severe narcolepsy. Does anyone know of support groups I can contact?

Posting from abroad

There is a website based in the United States called www.sleepnet.com, which has information on a range of sleeping disorders, including narcolepsy. There is a forum on the site specifically about narcolepsy, which you might find useful. It is not the same as speaking to people face to face but you may be able to get useful information and share your own experiences.

Miranda

Google it

Try searching for "narcolepsy forum" in google.co.uk. I am sure there will be a list of sites available, which would provide you with contacts and other people you can talk to.

When you find a forum that you like, lurk for a bit to make sure the site is a good one.

I found a forum for my own impairment, which has been a really big help to me. There is nothing like talking to someone who goes through exactly what you go through. Hope this helps. Good luck.

Liz Williams

Highly recommended

You could try Narcolepsy Action for Positive and Practical Solutions (NAPPS)*. They helped my friend who was diagnosed with narcolepsy a while ago. They are based in the UK and help you find other people to talk to, people who understand what is happening to you and what you are going through.

Angela R

* NAPPS, email: napps@cwcom.net or visit: www.napps.cwc.net

NEXT MONTH'S QUESTION:

"I have a parking bay outside my parents' house. Due to my epilepsy I can't drive, so my dad is my registered driver. We have a neighbour making our lives hell and she has started to park in the bay. I have asked her nicely to move but she refuses. What should I do?"

Send your answers and your own questions to "Ask The Readers" at *Disability Now*, 6 Market Road, London, N7 9PW or email: editor@disabilitynow.org.uk with "Question Of The Month" in the subject line.



SIMON SAYS

Discovering your sexuality is hard, especially when you live at home, but you must be assertive if you want privacy

enjoying sex with yourself – although maybe that is too taboo to admit!

If there is physical difficulty in masturbating, it may require someone to help him find a way.

Obtaining an adapted vibrator for men may be one solution. This is not usually something a parent would be

home. How do you mature into an adult emotionally and sexually when you are still being cared for by your parents?

Partly it is about being assertive. It is about planning for the future and the possibility of independent living and direct payments.

Discovering your sexuality is not easy, especially around parents.

Also there can be great benefit in getting some counselling, not just about your sexuality, but about how to be assertive as a disabled person who happens to need daily support.

Start by remembering that parents or carers should knock before they enter your room. As an adult, your privacy should be respected.

* Relate, tel: 0845 456 1310 or visit: www.relate.org.uk

** Basrt, tel: 020 8543 2707 or visit: www.basrt.org.uk

'As an adult your privacy should be respected'

involved in, but a friend or health professional may help or it could be available online and be delivered.

He could try and talk to his GP or a sex-friendly social worker willing to find out for him. Psychosexual therapists are always available via Relate* or Basrt**.

However, it seems this young man faces some fundamental problems that confront many younger disabled people living at

Send your relationship questions to "Simon says" at the usual postal address or email: editor@disabilitynow.org.uk

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• Motability

Books

**The Blunkett Tapes: My Life in the Bear Pit**David Blunkett
Bloomsbury, £25

Born blind and poor, David Blunkett has risen to – and fallen from – the most powerful posts in British political life.

The Blunkett Tapes consists of diaries and comment on his years in and out of high office, from the 1997 election to his second resignation in 2005.

Following Labour's victory, Blunkett became secretary of state for education and employment, and oversaw the establishment of the Disability Rights Commission. Between June 2001 and December 2004, he was home secretary.

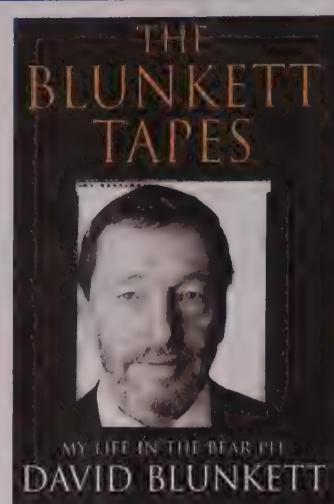
After his first resignation in 2004, over the fast tracking of a visa for his lover's nanny, he returned to cabinet as secretary of state for work and pensions in May 2005. He resigned again over undeclared shares in a biosciences firm later that year.

The diaries contain

intriguingly brief entries on disability rights. One from November 1999 notes: "Tony Blair has now ruled absolutely that the Disability Rights Task Force material can be incorporated into our legislation this winter. So he has overridden Margaret Beckett, as Leader of the House, and those who were against extending the legislation – but what a battle."

Blunkett also describes lobbying colleagues while at the Home Office, to maintain the tough stance of Labour's first Welfare Reform Bill, which in 1999 limited eligibility and introduced an element of means testing into incapacity benefit.

Perhaps chastened by his own period out of a top job between resignations, once back in charge at work and pensions in 2005 he outlines how he reversed a decision to cut the Access to Work programme: "I can't believe that officials should have expected me, of all people, to ratify a cut in Access to Work. It is one of those programmes we ought to be expanding



rather than cutting... God knows how we expect to implement the Welfare to Work programme if we can't help people get the wherewithal to do the job when they get one."

It is impossible not to feel admiration and pity for the personal pain that Blunkett reveals, yet his admissions of mistakes usually feel like passing the buck.

Apart from the £400,000 he got from his publishers, the book's purpose is to perhaps prove the wisdom of the maxim "never apologise, never explain".

Agnes Fletcher

Film

**The 50th London Film Festival**

I was really looking forward to the Times BFI 50th London Film Festival after last year set such a high standard. This year, however, there were fewer films examining impairment and disability, and the quality was variable.

A real disappointment was *Requiem*, about a girl in 1970s Germany and the attempt to cure her epilepsy with a demonic exorcism. It was far too swayed towards religious mumbo-jumbo.

Another letdown was *Blindsight*, which followed a group of gung-ho Westerners leading a terrified group of visually-impaired young Tibetans up a Himalayan peak. The Westerners were patronising and the kids just cried and vomited.

In the midst of these stinkers shone a few pearls. A special mention must go to *The Ground Truth* (pictured), directed by Patricia Foulkrod. This powerful documentary examined the lack of care and recognition given by the USA to troops injured in Iraq.



The neglect incensed me, but the soldiers' testimony was really moving.

Watching the Danish film, *Offscreen*, was a particularly intense experience. An actor decides to film his life in its entirety, moving from gentle comedy to something much more menacing. Nicholas Bro's performance is mesmerising as he lurches into madness.

Final applause goes to *Dry Season* from Chad in west Africa. This elegant film is about a young man sent by his blind uncle to avenge the death of his father in the civil war. He is offered work by his father's killer; a devout Muslim, now using a voice aid after his throat was split. War maims, but reconciliation is possible. It was a fantastic way to end the festival and I am looking forward to next year once more.

Michael Shamash

For what's on this month visit: www.disabilitynow.org.uk

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Renault Master 2.5 Diesel Versa	PJ52 FXS	5 Seats, Tail Lift	24,000	11,595
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What's On

The Inclusive Fitness National Conference is taking place on 13 December at the Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre in Westminster. Tel: 0114 257 2060, www.inclusivefitness.org

The **RNIB** invites blind and partially sighted people to try out new reading solutions, from standalone scanners to Braille. 4 December, 10am-4pm at the RNIB, tel: 020 7391 2308, www.rnib.org.uk

Werewolves ice hockey for young people with learning difficulties meets alternate Saturdays at Streatham Ice Rink. Tel: 020 8644 1998, email: mike@streathamicehockey.com

Websites

A new, image-led website has been launched to make the internet more accessible to young people and children with learning difficulties, using Symbol, a pictorial language, rather than the written word. It includes news, music, film and sport. www.askability.org.uk

Bradford District Council has collaborated with DisabledGo to provide a

Publications

The British Paralympic Association has launched a new, multimedia educational resource on the Paralympics, *Ability vs Ability*, available in different formats from www.abilityvsability.co.uk

The first ever fitness DVD in BSL has been released, with subtitles. £12.99, tel: 020 869 83591 or visit www.triukltd.co.uk

Reflecting Lives was a creative writing project working with people socially

excluded because of their age, disability or where they lived. Copies of the book produced as part of the project can be bought at www.whitehillpublishing.org.uk

A new guide for disabled motorists, *Get Motoring*, has been launched by **RADAR** and **Motability Operations**, which covers everything a disabled driver should need to know, from driving lessons to vehicle maintenance. For a copy, tel: 020 7250 3222 or

visit the **RADAR** website www.radar.org.uk

Lord Brian Rix, president of **Mencap**, has written a history of people with learning difficulties. *All about us!* includes personal experiences of people with learning difficulties and their families, and a history of Mencap. £20/£12 paperback, tel: 0845 077 0777, www.mencap.org.uk

Mencap has launched a CD, *Meet the People*, designed to explain issues

around profound and multiple learning difficulties to professionals, with personal stories and an examination of communication and advocacy.

The Line Manager Guide from **Forum Publications** is a tool designed to help managers deliver good disability practice, adapt to working with disabled colleagues, and understand disability law. Tel: 020 7403 3020, www.realising-potential.org

Appointments

The **RNID** has appointed a new member of its board of trustees – Jeff McWhinney, who is deaf and uses BSL, and is a former chief executive of the British Deaf Association.

Websites

guide to accessible shops, pubs, cinemas and other public places in the city, with information on hearing loops, Braille, wheelchair accessibility and other issues. www.DisabledGo.info

The **MINT** guide has recently produced a similar, independent report for Liverpool, with reviews of services and accessibility. www.themintguide.co.uk

www.disabilityworks.co.uk is a new website with an online dating service for disabled people, together with support, news and advice. You can upload photos, talk on webcam, and chat on the forums. Speed-dating events and an annual ball may follow!

To celebrate 15 years of Typetalk, the **RNID** telephone relay service for deaf people

and those with communication difficulties, service users are being invited to log on and share their Typetalk memories. www.typetalk.org

The Accessible Property Register is a property website for accessible and adapted homes for sale or rent across the UK. www.accessible-property.org.uk

A database of Paralympic

Games results dating back to 1960 has been launched by the International Paralympic Committee. www.paralympic.org

A national database of Blue Badge parking spaces is being built, with an online map and the facility to search for nearby spaces using Satellite Navigation, and add missing spaces at www.gonmad.co.uk/satnav

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Personal

I AM VERY isolated due to panic attacks, mood swings, ptsd, my social life is non-existent. I'm a single mum with an independent 10 year old daughter. I'm quiet, sensitive, kind, caring, like animals and nature. Obviously, my daughter is my main interest. I'd like understanding friends to possibly email/meet Brighton or near. Box no: 333

BLONDE, BLUE EYES, sun tanned guy, young 40, slim, single, kind, very solvent, generous seeks nice female to spoil and pamper this Christmas, please write ala. Box no: 334

Cars/vans/caravans

WANTED: FIAT MULTIPLA with Brotherwood conversion, with the option of being the front passenger. Please reply to Toyah Wordsworth: 01302 327524 (Yorkshire) or email: wtoyah@hotmail.com

MITSUBISHI SPACEWAGON SE2.4GDI, auto, Palma red, grey interior, W reg (2000), e/mirrors and e/windows, pas, air con. 7 seater with 2 removable seats, fitted removable electric hoist for wheelchair and hand controls for brake/acceleration. In excellent condition, only one owner from new with fsh, 14k miles, MOT expires Jul 07. £7,500 ono. Tel: 0113 2689394 (Leeds) or email: edmundson@wentav.freemail.co.uk

WANTED: TOP OF THE range Chrysler Grand Voyager with rear wheelchair access, preferably electric. Must be under five years old and in nice condition. Will travel to view the right vehicle. Please contact Tina: 07769946151 or email: tinadavis21@hotmail.com

CITROEN BERLINGO 1.6 multispace forte '51/ Nov 01, 65k miles, silver, Brotherwood wheelchair conversion, 4 dr, 2 rear seats. Remote central locking, MOT 26.11.06, £5,500.00 ono. Tel: 07740 482759.

CHAIRMAN RENAULT KANGOO, red 1.1 2002, 21k miles, one owner, 5 door, 2 seats at front, fixed rear restraints, ramp with fixed winch by Gowrings. Full service history, MOT (until Mar 07), Asking price £4,500 ono, good condition. Tel: 020 7038 7131 (London) or any time 07866 567198.

NISSAN VANETTE VERSA, 2.3 diesel, Widnes conversion, P reg, 75K miles, MOT (Sept 07), seats 5 plus wheelchair, manual ramp electric winch, vgc, £3,250 ono, tel 020 8654 7497 (Croydon) or email: marioneasterbrook@hotmail.co.uk

FIAT MULTIPLA 1.6 SX, 2002 reg, 25k miles, e/windows, pas, MOT expires July 2007. With Brotherwood wheelchair conversion incl rear ramp and wheelchair user beside driver. Only one owner from new, fully serviced, supplier maintained, £11,000 ono. Tel: 020 8890 0233 (Feltham, W. London).

CITROEN BERLINGO 1.6i Multispace Forte '51/ Oct 01, only 31,800 miles, silver, pas, 5 doors, 2 rear seats, e/front windows, remote central locking, 4 new tyres. Brotherwood wheelchair conversion with lowered floor and ramp; windows, vents and storage space in roof. Two owners, Full year's MOT. £6,500. Tel: 01978 820798 (Wrexham, North East Wales) or email griffithsje@gmail.com

WANTED: TRANSIT, VW OR similar swb van. Must have automatic gearbox and air conditioning. Up to 5 years old with low mileage, less than 60k miles. Hand controls would be ideal but not essential. Tel 01384 214868. Email gill@steldawn.co.uk

VAUXHALL ASTRA 1.6, Y reg (2001), auto, 3 door, green, pas, e/windows, remote central locking. Hand controls for accelerator and brake. Only one owner from new, 31k miles and full MOT until March '07. £3,800 ono. Mob: 07796 698701 (West Sussex) or email: dsoderholm@mac.com

2006 (JULY) FIAT Ducato 11 with wheelchair access, 4 Seats + 2 Wheelchairs, 2.3JTD Turbo Diesel SWB Minibus by Advanced Minibus.co.uk, Vision Ramp, Q'straint QRT-Deluxe Wheelchair Restraints, ABS, PAS, Twin Side Doors, Heated Rear Windows, Alarm with remote C/Locking, E/Windows & Mirrors, Radio CD, Safe-T-Bar rear bumper, Mileage just 1,500, Long Remainder of 2/3 yrs Warranties, Virtually as New, £17,500 ono. (No VAT) Tel: 07984149493 (Nottingham) or Email: steve@ok2talk.co.uk

DAIHATSU HI-JET P-reg, Universal Mobility ramp and winch adaptation for wheelchair. 18,500 miles, road tax til 30/09/07, MOT September. Two owners. New front wheels, new battery. £2,500 ono. Tel: 01442 264 020 or ian.grant@gmail.com (put "Daihatsu" in the subject please). Photos: www.johndow.com/files/Daihatsu_side.jpg & www.johndow.com/files/Daihatsu_rear.jpg

RENAULT CLIO INITIALE 1.6, auto, 2003 top of range model, 5-door, climate and cruise control, leather/suede seats, e/sunroof, e/mirrors and e/windows, hand controls for accelerator and brake. 19k miles, first class condition, MOT until April and only 2 owners from new. £6,200 ono. Tel: 01489 877358 (Hants) or email: dixond@gotadsl.co.uk

RENAULT KANGOO 1.4, X Reg, 76k miles, green. Updated Constables conversion with wheelchair ramp. Two owners, full service history, seats 3 plus wheelchair, new tyres, new exhaust, MOT (March 2007) and tax, £4,850 ono. Tel 01323 833833 (Sussex), or any time mob: 07990 592761 or email martin@pettingerhilton.co.uk

WANTED: INEXPENSIVE COACHBUILT MOTORHOME, wheelchair accessible, able-bodied driver. Tel: 01202 571328 (Dorset) or mobile: 07753 314959.

VW T5 CARAVELLE SE104 PS TDI PD (blue). One owner (purchased June 2004 and only 8,500 miles) Fitted with Turney Carony chair (unused) This model turns from a seat into a wheelchair and back so the occupant need never leave the seat. Car has many extras to the many provided by VW on this model (eg. folding table; sliding doors both sides; 4 rear seats on rails, which enables a second wheelchair occupant) : they are: Indianapolis sat.nav; front and rear parking sensors; cruise control; telephone hands-free kit; mud-flaps; electric folding mirrors; extra keys; 99% perfect. Second-hand value £20,000. Tel. Revd. Peters 023 8055 8497 (Southampton) or email: eugene.peters1@btopenworld.com

VOLVO 960 ESTATE 3.0 24v, 98k miles, auto, e/sunroof, e/windows, e/mirrors and heated e/seats with memory function. CD player with radio/cassette, leather interior, air con, pas, cruise control, abs. Hand controls with electric hoist in boot. Full 12 months' MOT, 6 months' tax, only 2 owners from new and fsh. £3,000 ono. Car in St Albans for viewing. Tel: 01225 484439 or mob: 07900 892920 or email: tskeelspiggins@hotmail.com

RENAULT KANGOO GREEN, 6750 miles, MOT, Conversion by Allied Vehicles, electronic pulley for easy use, sprung rear ramp and seats 3 plus wheelchair. Electronic windows, central locking, air condition and CD player. Offers around £15K, Tel. 01925 248370 (Warrington) or email andrea@pinkladiesmembers.co.uk

FORD TRANSIT, R reg, red, diesel, auto, e/windows and e/sunroof. Drive by wheelchair with rear ramp and RICON lift, automatic doors, fitted with 9-way Lodgeson's infra red system, automatic fire extinguisher. Seats 5 incl wheelchair driver - 3 in front and 2 in back. 25k miles, MOT until Aug 2007, fitted with digibox, in vgc, £9,500 ono. Tel: 01452 863767 (Glos) or 01452 537039.

2000 TOYOTA YARIS verso 1.3 auto, electronic ring hand controls, ramp for scooter 38000 miles, £4250 ono (will sell scooter too) gary.parkins@btinternet.com. Tel: 02920 482968 (Cardiff) for details and more photographs.

Wheelchairs/scooters

'ROLLS ROYCE' OF manually operated wheelchairs - The Ibis XC. Full tilt-in-space capacity, seat height and frame width adjustable, wheel positioning and anti-tip brackets. Excellent condition, bought for £4,300, used 6 months, sell for £2,000 ono. Tel: 01291 622894 (Chepstow) or email: sullkthrn@aol.com

STERLING ELECTRIC SCOOTER, 2 years' old, 8 mph, Front and rear lights indicators, basket, charger, back and arm rest. £375. Tel: 01794 367 966 (Stockbridge, Hampshire) Photo available.

BALDER ELECTRIC STAND-UP wheelchair, bought 2003. Currently working but in need of repair. Cost £17,500 new, asking £2,000 ono. Tel: 020 7431 0364 or mob: 07766 812333 or email: s.lewis@mmu.ac.uk

ACTION THREE EXPRESS, purple frame, with detachable wheels. Bought this year and hardly used, £300 ono. Tel: 02476 268094 (Coventry) or email: george.morris4@ntlworld.com

Household & Families

ACORN STAIR LIFT, guaranteed for 3 months, free fitting anywhere in the country into the buyer's property. No matter how many stairs and with or without a platform. Asking £800, will accept £300 down payment and £100 per month. Tel Graham or Michelle: 02392 602 423 (Portsmouth) or email graham.coleborn@yahoo.co.uk

MINIVATOR STAIRLIFT, STRAIGHT run, approx 4.5 metres. £250 ono. Stairlift in Mitcham. Tel: 020 8252 5011 or mobile: 07956 617917 or email: ajay@ajaypamneja.com

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PEUGEOT BOXER SWB 1.9 LTR DIESEL Date first registered: 13/04/1999, White, 5 seater, 2 owners, Good condition, 5 Speed manual, 98,000 miles, MOT until 29/08/2007, Full Width Lightweight Ramp, Non-Slip Flooring, Power Steering, Radio/cassette player, Short wheelbase, Side load door, Soft cord trimmed interior, Twin front passenger seat, Two rear saloon passenger seats. £4,250 plus VAT

VOLKSWAGEN SHUTTLE SWB 1.9 TDI 104 PSI Date first registered: 01/02/2005, Red, 8 seater, 1 owner, As new, 5 speed manual, 20,000 miles, MOT until: 01/02/2008, A.B.S., Air Bag, Air conditioning, Balance of manufacturer's Warranty, Electric Mirrors, Electric windows, Immaculate condition inside and out, Power Steering, Remote Central Locking, Twin Side Doors, Radio/cassette player, Rear Saloon Heating/Cooling System. £13,995 plus VAT

FIAT SCUDO COMBI MONTANA 2.0 JTD Date first registered: 05/04/03, Blue, 3 seats, Condition: Good, 5 speed manual, 30,000 miles, 5 door, Air conditioning, Electric Mirrors, Electric reels, Electric windows, Full Width Lightweight Ramp, Lowered rear floor for wheelchair access, Power Steering, Remote Central Locking, Twin Side Doors. £9,995

MERCEDES BENZ SPRINTER 3 SERIES SWB 2.2 CDI 4 seats, Automatic Transmission, Remote control rear door and lift operation, Ricon lift, Electric wheelchair lockdown, Six Way powered drivers seat. £14,000

RENAULT MASTER SWB 2.2 DCI DIESEL Date registered: 12/07/01, Silver, 6 seats, 5 speed manual, 25,000 miles, Could take 2 wheelchairs, Immaculate condition inside and out, Non-Slip Flooring, Power Steering, Radio/cassette player, Remote Central Locking, RICON CLEARWAY electric wheelchair lift, Side load door, Twin front passenger seat, Three removable rear saloon seats. £9,600

FIAT SCUDO COMBI MONTANA 2.0 JTD Date registered: 05/04/03, Blue, 3 seats, 5 speed manual, 30,000 miles, 5 door, Air conditioning, Electric Mirrors, Electric reels, Electric windows, Full Width Lightweight Ramp, Lowered rear floor for wheelchair access, One rear saloon seat, Power Steering, Radio/cassette player, Remote Central Locking, Service History, Twin Side Doors. £9,995

RENAULT TRAFIC SWB 1.9 DCI 100 TURBO DIESEL Date first registered: 05/12/03, Blue, 5 seats, 1 owner, Good Condition throughout, 6 speed manual, 29,000 miles, MOT until: 06/06/07, Air Bag, Could take 2 wheelchairs, Full Width Lightweight Ramp, One quick release removable rear seat, Power Steering, Radio/single CD player, Remote Central Locking, Service History, Short wheelbase, Side load door, Single front passenger seat, Two rear saloon passenger seats. £11,500

FIAT DOBLO ASPEN 1.9D SX Registered: 13/08/03, Red, 3 seats, Manual, 29,000 miles, 5 door, Air Bag, Electric reels, Electric windows, Full Width Lightweight Ramp, Lowered rear floor for wheelchair access, One rear saloon seat, Power Steering, Remote Central Locking, Service History, Twin Side Doors. Cost: £9,195

FIAT DOBLO ASPEN 1.9JTD Registered: 10/05/05, Metallic Blue, 4 seats, As new, Manual, 19,500 miles, Top of the range, 5 door, Air Bag, Air conditioning, Alloy wheels, Balance of manufacturers Warranty, Electric Mirrors, Electric reels, Full Width Lightweight Ramp, Lowered rear floor for wheelchair access, Power Steering, Remote Central Locking, Two rear saloon passenger seats, A.B.S. Cost: £11,995

VOLKSWAGEN TRANSPORTER T4 SWB 2.5 TDI Registered: 08/05/03, Blue, 5 seats, Manual, 32,000 miles, Air Bag, Cruise control, Electric windows, Full Width Lightweight Ramp, Power Steering, Remote Central Locking, Service History, Twin front passenger seat, Two rear saloon passenger seats. Cost: £9,750

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05	Mercedes Vaneo 1.6 Ambiente MPV. 60 inches of head room. 4 seats	£19995
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53	Renault Kangoo 16v . Low Floor. Lowering Suspension. 3 Seats	£11495
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• Recruitment (on page 39 to 42)

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Staff who have a disability are currently under-represented and we wish to improve the diversity of our workforce. The University is a member of the double tick pledge and will interview all applicants who meet the essential criteria.

For information about our vacancies please check our recruitment website <http://www.kent.ac.uk/jobs/>

For details in different formats, please apply to The Personnel Department on 01227 827837 (24 hours). Textphone users please phone 01227 824145.

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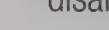
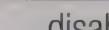
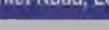
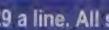
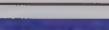
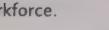
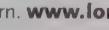
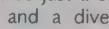
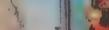
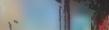
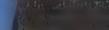
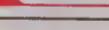
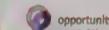
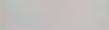
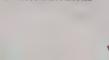
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• Recruitment (on page 39 to 42)

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Come together.

Forging communities. Building neighbourhoods. That's what drives us to succeed. Providing 13,000 homes across East London and Essex, means our level of involvement is so much more than a housing association. With a wide range of roles available, from care, housing and development, to IT, HR and Finance, we're interested in hearing from all members of the community. If you're enthusiastic about what we do, or have first hand experience of the service we provide, then we have a place for you.

www.east-thames.co.uk

We are an equal opportunities employer.

Make your next role as important as ours.

DFID, the Department for International Development: leading the British government's fight against world poverty.

We offer opportunities in our headquarters in London and East Kilbride – but also in many developing countries, with staff based in DFID offices plus British Embassies and High Commissions around the world. We have roles for leaders; professionals; specialists; managers; graduates and administrators.

DFID is an equal opportunities employer and selection is on merit. Applications are welcomed from all parts of the community and we actively encourage interest from women, ethnic minority groups and those with a disability. We will make any reasonable adjustments should they be required. Candidates should be UK Nationals, nationals of a member state of the European Economic Area (EEA) or Commonwealth citizens with the right to work in the UK.

You can find out more about us, and our work, on our website www.dfid.gov.uk. You'll also find information about specific vacancies, opportunities, and an electronic application on the site.



DFID
Department for
International
Development

www.dfid.gov.uk



diversity in people

TENDER

ESPO

Peterborough City Council
DIVERSITY TRAINING

PETERBOROUGH
CITY COUNCIL

On behalf of Peterborough City Council (PCC), the Eastern Shires Purchasing Organisation ('ESPO') invites tenders for the provision of Diversity Training to be supplied as part of a Diversity Programme recently developed by the Council. Further information about the Programme and specific details of the training to be provided are described within the Invitation to Tender document.

As part of the Council's commitment in mainstreaming equality and diversity, PCC wishes to appoint a provider as soon as possible, ideally by early 2007, with the expectation that training will begin shortly after. The estimated value of the contract is between £60,000 - 80,000 pa.

For tender documents, please write to: Hollie Curtis, Assistant Contracts Admin Officer, at the Eastern Shires Purchasing Organisation, Barnsdale Way, Grove Park, Enderby, Leicester, LE19 1ES, fax (0116) 294 4399 or email h.curtis@espo.org

Please quote reference 2827 and note that the closing date for receipt of completed tenders will be early January 2007 - the exact date to be advised in the Invitation to Tender document.

>lsc

Leading learning and skills

We're investing millions to improve access to learning.
Join us and change things from the inside.

Nationwide opportunities

Put simply, it's the Learning and Skills Council's job to help people learn new skills so that businesses in England can compete with the world's best. We do this by working with the country's colleges and training providers, and aim to help all learners to reach their full potential, regardless of race, gender or disability.

The range of jobs available at the LSC is broad – project management, finance, HR, education policy, administration and communications. We have introduced both part-time and flexible contracts, family friendly policies, and have a supportive work environment.

It is essential that we have a workforce that reflects the diversity that exists within our country.

If you'd like to be involved in an organisation that believes in a better society and healthier economy, find out more and see our current vacancies at www.recruitment.lsc.gov.uk

Improvement through diversity and equality



• Recruitment (on page 39 to 42)



PASSIONATE

It's your capital. Be part of it.

21st Century London. Culturally diverse. Ever changing and evolving. Open to the world. As government to this most vibrant and cosmopolitan of cities, the GLA has a responsibility both to reflect and lead the pace of change. Ours is a fast-moving and forward-thinking environment, a microcosm of the exciting capital we serve. Disability equality is high on our agenda as you would expect.

We recognise the commitment disabled people bring to a role that can enhance their talents and skills and the contribution they make to the corporate achievement of organisational goals.

The Greater London Authority is committed to employing a workforce representative of London's population and has set itself the challenging target of having 10% of its staff that are disabled people. That's something to think about when you're considering your next career move. We positively want disabled people working for us at all levels and are working hard to make sure that we get rid of barriers so you can achieve your maximum potential.

All GLA vacancies are advertised on our website. Alternatively you can call us for a current vacancy list on 020 7983 4143 or 4157 (textphone).

www.london.gov.uk/jobs.jsp

GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY

Taking pride in a diverse workforce.

Working at the heart of Scope

Politics & Policy Officer (Children)

Politics & Policy Officer (Adults)

Market Road, London N7

£19,447 - £26,346 + Inner London Weighting per annum (35 hours per week)

Scope's mission is to drive the change to make our society the first where disabled people achieve equality. For this to happen, disabled people have to have choice and control over their own lives enabling independent living and inclusive education to become a reality and a way of life.

As a Politics & Policy Officer with Scope you'll help us influence and shape the UK's public policy agenda and legislation to enable disabled people to achieve equality. You will work collaboratively with colleagues across Scope and other organisations to develop policy, respond to government consultations, brief MPs and peers and conduct research. Focusing on either disabled children or disabled adults, you'll play a key role in delivering the Time to Get Equal campaign and helping Scope change society.

You will need to have experience of public policy analysis and an in-depth knowledge of policy and legislation affecting disabled people, particularly in the policy area relevant to your role.

Scope

About cerebral palsy.
For disabled people achieving equality.

Committed to effectively involving disabled people in policy development work and ensuring all Scope's policies reflect the reality of disabled people's lives, you will have a solid understanding of campaigning methods and outstanding analytical, written and oral communication skills.

These posts are reserved for disabled people.

For an application form please contact Ruth Scott, Head of Politics and Policy, Politics and Policy Department, Scope, 6 Market Road, London N7 9PW. Or email: ruth.scott@scope.org.uk Tel: 020 7619 7251

Closing date: Monday 11 December 2006.

Interview date: Monday 18 & Tuesday 19 December 2006.

Scope is a Registered Charity.



For further information please visit
www.scope.org.uk/jobs

DEADLINE – Disability Now

January 2007 published 16 December. Classified deadlines: Booking: 1 December. Copy: 5 December.

• Holidays

PENROSE BURDEN NORTH CORNWALL "Holiday Care Award Winners"
Holiday Cottages designed for wheelchair users and their families. Rural setting with superb views. Dogs welcome. Wood burning stoves and daily meal service.
Please ring or write for colour brochure.
R&N Hall, Penrose Burden, St Beward, Bodmin, Cornwall PL30 4LZ. Telephone Bodmin (01208) 850277 or 850617
www.penroseburden.co.uk

Hartgrove Farm

Shaftesbury Dorset

Award winning holiday cottages on working farm. A really lovely holiday for disabled guests and their families. Glorious countryside and views. Logfires. C.H. Wheel-in shower. Mobile Hoist and other equipment.

Tel: 01747 811830

www.hartgrovefarm.co.uk

Normandy France

Magnificent accessible farm house in beautiful 1 acre garden. Sleeps 14 (6 bedrooms, 4 bathrooms) huge G.F. ensuite bedroom, Wheel-in shower, bath, mobile hoist. Superb heated swimming pool, 25 mins unspoilt sandy beaches. Only 1 hr from port.

Tel: 01747 812019

www.normandyfarmhouses.co.uk

Brittany Cottage to let.

Adapted for wheelchair use. Good access to beaches. Sleeps up to 6. Details **C. Hodgson.** Tel (01924) 499220. www.brimartravel.co.uk

Disabled & Carers English Coastal Holidays

Spacious built for quadriplegic owner. Ceiling hoists Elec hi/lo beds Shower/toileting chairs etc. 2 flats sleep 6 and 4 All mod cons stunning sea/mountain views Heysham, Morecambe Bay. Caravan on sheltered site, balcony, pool complex, Fishing boating lake. Filey Yorkshire Sleeps 4-6 Call Allan or Jan 01274 588142 for brochures

Dordogne – SW France

Two stunning wheelchair accessible properties in the idyllic rural setting of Perigord Vert. The Grande Maison sleeps up to 10, the Petite Maison up to 5. Contact **Ed Passant** on 01233 731097 or ed@accessholidays.com www.accessholidays.com

Near Salisbury

– newly converted stable block self-catering units. Ground floor 1 double/twin bedroom en-suite wheel-in shower. Upstairs 1 double, 1 single, shower room. Open plan kitchen & living room. Patio & shared garden. ETB category 2, 4-star highly commended. Non-smoking. Prices from £195 pw. Available all year. Tel: 01722 349002, e-mail: mail@old-stables.co.uk, www.old-stables.co.uk

An idyllic & peaceful cumbria beauty spot.

The Tranquill Otter. Lux lodges with sauna & whirlpool bath/hot-tub, logburner. All lakeside position with picture book views. Outstanding w/c accessible lodges, paths, shops etc. Wheely Boat! 01228 576661. www.thetranquillotter.co.uk

Cornwall – Nr Truro.

2 newly converted barns on small family farm. Fully wheelchair accessible. Ensuite bedrooms. Sleeps up to 6. For details contact Esme Eyles 01726 883240 or www.treworgansfarm.co.uk

• Accommodation

- Searching for accessible or adapted property?
- Accessible or adapted property to sell or let?
- Looking for an approved estate agent? The Accessible Property Register web: www.accessible-property.org.uk Tel: 0114 2307058

CONDITIONS

Disability Now maintains the right to amend or withdraw lineage adverts without prior notice. All adverts must comply with the British Code of Advertising Practice.

Telephone numbers and addresses will not be placed in personal adverts, for confidentiality. Instead, Box numbers will be provided. Likewise, telephone numbers and addresses will not be given out over the telephone if requested.

Box Numbers can be requested for non-personal adverts. However, it may limit the response to it. If you want to advertise documents, goods or services contact Patrick Durham-Matthews tel: 020 7619 7320, fax: 020 7619 7331.

Lineage adverts can only be used by private individuals. All commercial enquiries must be addressed to Patrick Durham-Matthews (see contact details above).

DN cannot accept responsibility for loss or damage of adverts or letters during forwarding. It is the responsibility of the advertiser to check the content of their advert, and to ensure any abbreviations cannot be misunderstood.

• Recruitment (on page 39 to 42)

Neighbourhood Manager
Salary £24,684 - £34,877

Catalyst Communities Housing Association manages more than 10,000 rented, leasehold and special needs homes in West London and the South East.

Part of the Catalyst Housing Group, providing over 15,000 homes in London and the South East.

We are an equal opportunities employer committed to diversity
A charitable housing association

Catalyst
Communities



we're supporting
AGE POSITIVE

We are looking to recruit a Neighbourhood Manager to join our London Housing team based in Ealing. This is a challenging and exciting role.

You will be part of a dynamic team responsible for the generic management of a patch of mixed tenure properties, including the recovery of rent arrears, anti social behaviour and lettings. You will also be helping us prepare for our audit inspection in March 2007.

You will ideally have access to a car for work purposes. For further information or to apply for this role please visit our website at www.chg.org.uk/careers

Closing date: Monday 4th December 2006 @ 5pm
Interview date: Tuesday 12th December 2006

Improving Disabled People's Access to Live Music

Regional Development Manager - £22,480 (pro rata)
3 Days per Week - Fixed Term Contract: 1 Year

We are looking for a Regional Development Manager to coordinate our core work in the London and South East regions. The post is based at our fully accessible London office but will involve liaising between the two specified regions.

The successful candidate must understand the barriers that deaf/disabled people face at clubs, music venues and festivals, and have experience of working within the music industry.

Core work will be recruiting deaf/disabled Disability Equality Trainers who want to specialise in training the music industry, and organising Disability Equality Training sessions for live music venues, clubs and festivals.

Deadline for applications: 15th December 2006

Interviews held: 8th January 2007

For an application form contact Attitude is Everything:-
attitude@artsline.org.uk / 0207 388 2227 /
Artsline, 54 Chalton Street, London, NW1 1HS
www.attitudeiseverything.org.uk

We particularly invite applications from deaf and disabled people.

Attitude is Everything is funded by:-



disability access information service



• Services

BIRKDALE PAEDIATRIC & ADULT NEURO CLINIC



Advice and treatment from newborn babies to adults.

A wide range of conditions treated, some of these include movement, posture, balance, walking, coordination, hand-function and learning difficulties.

Specialise in cerebral palsy and neurological conditions.

Farshideh Bondarenko DIP PHYSIO MCSP SRP

web: www.neuro-physio.co.uk tel: 0208 998 9403

Scope for you to make a difference

Project Co-ordinator

(Young disabled peoples' participation)

Based at Beaumont College, Lancaster
£23,722 per annum (35 hours per week)

Scope's mission is to drive the change to make our society the first where disabled people achieve equality. We are a leading disability organisation focusing on people with cerebral palsy and are looking for an enthusiastic and inspiring individual to back the rights of young disabled people in the north west of England.

In this exciting new role you will work with young disabled people in getting their voices heard, to develop and facilitate their role in political campaigning and to influence local and national government policy.

Working from home and at Beaumont College, you will provide vital support and encouragement to young disabled people to develop and maintain forums and networks to communicate their views. A clear and confident communicator with excellent project management skills, you will actively develop links with mainstream youth services and decision makers to promote consultation with young disabled people.

Your personal direct experience and/or knowledge of disability will be seen as an advantage. For an application pack please contact Ruth Scott, Head of Politics and Policy, Politics & Policy Department, Scope, 6 Market Road, London N7 9PW.

Email: ruth.scott@scope.org.uk

Tel: 020 7619 7251 Fax: 020 7619 7380

Closing date: 29 December 2006 Interview date: 12 January 2007.

We are committed to equal opportunities.

SCope

Supported by



About cerebral palsy.
For disabled people achieving equality.

For further information please visit
www.scope.org.uk/jobs

Ealing
Centre for Independent Living


LOTTERY FUNDED

Ealing CIL needs two full-time 35 hrs workers to join the team, to be based in a brand new community office and take a key role in our disability work in the borough.

Information and Advice Worker – Big Lottery funded. Your mission is to run satellite surgeries, to ensure disabled people who live the furthest from our centre get easier access to our service. Salary, £22,539 - £23,937. 3 year contract.

Access Worker – Bridge House Trust funded. Ultimately, your goal is to encourage local service providers to make 'reasonable adjustments' and improve access in the borough. You will provide access audits to shops, restaurants and other premises, work effectively with volunteers and manage a web-based directory. Salary £23,937 - £26,358. 3 year contract.

Closing date for applications for both posts is 2nd January 2007. (Interviews on 18th and 19th January 2007).

To receive an information pack contact: Sian Vasey, Ealing Centre for Independent Living, 1 Bayham Road, West Ealing W13 0TQ. Phone: 020 8840 8573. Text: 07887 757228.

Email: ecil@btconnect.com or web www.ecil.org

Applications from disabled people are strongly encouraged.

MUSIC AND ENTERTAINMENT



LAST MONTH'S WINNERS

The winners of the Nuvo Slatted Bath Board in the October issue were Ms Hayden from Norfolk, Mrs Skidmore from Bristol, Ms Withy from Co Derry, Mrs Fletcher from Merseyside, Mr Davies from Manchester and Mr Hughes from London. The winners of the Alan Bennett Single Spies CDs were Mrs Davey from Suffolk, Mrs Matsoukas from York and Mr Carter from Essex. The winners of the White Noise Relaxation CDs were Mrs Rook from Rotherham, Miss Mehrotra from Scotter, Mr Lawley from Kidderminster, Mr Clark from Cambridge, Ms Harvey from Flintshire, Mrs Mayes from Suffolk, Mr Lomax from Co Durham, Ms Younas from Nottingham, Mr Valavanis from London, Ms Jolley from Suffolk, Mr Clark from Coventry, A Prater from London, B Cunningham from West Midlands, B Litchfield from Perthshire, Mr Pearson from North Yorkshire, Mrs Ashworth from Lancs, Ms Boyden from Kent, Mr Spyer from Wiltshire, Mr Done from Oxfordshire and Ms Neville from London.

DN next month

All the best news, views, jobs and offers. On sale 16 December

LIFE'S A BEACH

In the first of two holiday specials, we put Liverpool under the access spotlight a year before it becomes Capital of Culture, and we take a look at some of the UK's most accessible beaches.

THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME

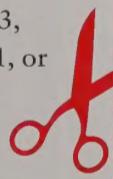
DN reviews the highs and lows of 2006, while writer and performer Mat Fraser predicts some of the highlights of 2007.

to enter

Tick the competition circle below, add your details, and send for FREE to *Disability Now*, Freepost WD4323, London N7 9BR, or you can fax it on 020 7619 7331, or email the details to: suzan.hillman@scope.org.uk

HMV

Triway



terms & conditions Closing date for entrants: 15.12.06 • Entrants must be over 18 • No proof of purchase required • UK entrants only • No cash alternatives • Winners notified by post • Editor's decision is final • Special offers not open to DN staff or associates • Winners may be announced in DN • In association with HMV and Logic Engineering Concepts Ltd. We may use your name and address for further marketing purposes. Please tick the box if you do not wish your details to be included

Please cut around the edges.

The festive season is here and it's time to hit the shops. Thanks to HMV, two *DN* readers can purchase music, DVDs and games with gift cards worth £30 each in one of HMV's 230 stores nationwide. HMV is the UK's leading music, DVD and games specialist and its world-famous 'dog & trumpet' trademark image has become synonymous with the development of recorded music entertainment. The gift cards can only be used in-store.

For your chance to win a gift card, just tick "HMV" on the entry form.

For more information about HMV music and entertainment products, and to find your nearest HMV store, visit www.hmv.co.uk

To download music, visit www.hmvdigital.com

Gift Card

top dog for music, dvds, games



WIN A TRICYCLE

Thanks to Logic Engineering Concepts Limited one lucky *DN* reader will win a Triway, worth about £580.

The Triway is a popular, lightweight, yet very rigid, modern tricycle with a low step-through height. It is suitable for the age group 10 years to adulthood. For ease of riding, it is equipped with 7 speed derailleur gearing and with dual V brakes it has excellent stopping power. A parking device is fitted to park safely on a slope.

If the use of gearing and a freewheel is a problem for the winner, Logic will give away an alternative tricycle called Twister (worth £482.93), which is the equivalent of Triway but is equipped with low ratio 1:1 fixed gearing.

For your chance to win, tick "Triway" on the entry form.

Logic is also offering *DN* readers a 10 per cent discount on all orders received in December 2006 and January 2007.

To find out more about the Logic product range, visit www.cyclemakers.com. Please also see our advert in this issue on page 20.



Do you have concerns about medical treatment received by you or a family member?

Foot Anstey
SOLICITORS

Foot Anstey are recognised as a leading firm in the investigation of medical negligence claims. We hold a franchise with the Legal Services Commission which enables us to offer Legal Aid in appropriate circumstances. Alternate methods of funding are also available.

If you have any concerns regarding medical treatment received please call our specialist team of lawyers who can provide advice and support.



For further information or to arrange an appointment please contact 0845 111 4008 or email: medical@foot-ansteys.co.uk

www.foot-ansteys.co.uk

legal solutions for life

The campaigning newspaper that puts you in the picture

Plus: Exclusive interview with David Cameron

DN disabilitynow

£1.80 December 2006

Attack on the right to life

Outrage over docs' call for killing debate

12 >

9 770958 467026

Lewis Reed

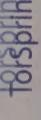
Different by Design

ALL NEW Volkswagen Caddy Life

Flexi-seat seating system

The ultimate dual purpose vehicle with up to 5 seats and converts in seconds to a 3 seat and 1 wheelchair fully accessible vehicle.

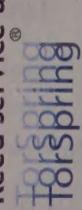
Featuring:

- Unique Flexi-seat® system
- Light weight one piece Torspring® ramp
- Twin side load doors for all round access.
- 12 degree ramp angle 

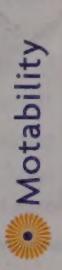
ALL NEW Volkswagen T5 8 Seater With Wheelchair Access

More seats, options and choice

- Seating for up to 8 passengers or 2 wheelchair travelling passengers (varying combinations available).
- Easy entry using a combination of one touch lowering suspension and TorSpring ramp.
- Ease of use for carers with a choice of 3 different roof heights.
- Tested and type approved.
- Backed by the full Lewis Reed service and warranty assurance.



Request a brochure of our full range and free no obligation home demonstration today.
Call 0845 345 0127 (lo-call rate) or visit www.lewisreedgroup.co.uk





Enjoy the difference

Jobs 38-42 and on our website: www.dni.co.uk